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AS I REMEMBER





READING ALOUD IN THE SIXTIES

# AS I REMEMBER

by

E. E. KELLETT

“As I remember, it was on this fashion bequeathed  
me by my father.”

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## PREFACE

**A** GOOD MANY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES have been recently published, some of which, as might have been expected from their authorship, are remarkably interesting. The writers, being good, and writing about themselves, have naturally found a good subject.

It would have been pleasant if I could have imitated these authors. That, however, is impossible: I cannot expect the public to take notice of so obscure and undistinguished a life as mine. What I have tried to do is something quite different: to give some account of past times and vanished people as I knew them: to play, in fact, the part of a traveller who happens to have seen a country not familiar to the majority of his audience and to describe it for their benefit. He cannot help mentioning himself, but the real interest is in the lands, cities, and minds of the tribes among which he has sojourned. Similarly, I myself inevitably enter into my story, but only so far as I am the teller and the eye-witness. I hope there is in it no more egoism than is unavoidable.

One motive for my writing has been that I think the times of which I speak have been greatly misunderstood and mistakenly censured. Certainly I hear opinions upon them which seem to me to be



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based on inadequate knowledge. If what I have said about them succeeds, to however small a degree, in removing these misconceptions, I shall be satisfied.

The chapters are deliberately desultory, and, unavoidably, more or less isolated and independent. They concern aspects of the life I knew and cannot be made perfectly continuous. But, I think, if taken as a whole, they will be found to give a tolerably fair and complete view of one not unimportant side of the almost infinitely various Victorian society.

## INTRODUCTION

THERE IS ALWAYS, I think, a special interest in a *personal* contribution to history. A dull precision may be found in state-papers and statistics; but an anecdote or a reminiscence gives life. I well remember the thrill which an incidental word of Lord Acton's stirred in his academic audience. He was lecturing on the causes of the Franco-Prussian War, and was showing how Bismarck manœuvred to induce the Spaniards to offer their vacant throne to a Hohenzollern, and thus exasperate France. Fifty thousand pounds were the bribe to overcome the scruples of the Spanish General Prim: "and," said Lord Acton in quiet parenthesis, "I knew the banker through whom the money passed." That sentence has remained in the minds of all the hearers: it turned intrigues, negotiations, and all the other abstractions in which historians deal, into living and acting *men*.<sup>1</sup>

Not less instructive was the effect of a similar utterance by another lecturer, shortly before the Great War. He was speaking of the younger Pitt, who had been dead more than a century. "I come now," said the lecturer, "to Pitt's oratory: and

<sup>1</sup> How effective it is when Dr. Hammond, describing the scenes during the trials of the "Swing" rioters in 1831, adds, "This is still vividly remembered by an old woman over ninety years of age." *Village Labourer*, p. 274.

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here I can speak almost at first hand, for my father heard him often and described his voice and manner to me again and again." There was a rustle in the audience—a start of surprise: and then some of them remembered that the speaker's father had been Byron's Headmaster at Harrow, born in 1773, and that we were thus, at one remove, being carried back a hundred and forty years. How much more vital was this impression than any that can be gained by the closest research! Or when the same man, in private conversation, the talk turning on Napoleon, remarked, "Oh yes, my father was one of those who rowed out to catch a sight of the fallen Emperor as he leant over the taffrail of the *Bellerophon*"—was not this more exciting than poring over documents "picked from the worm-holes of long-vanished days"?

The Victorian age has suffered doubly. On the one hand, it has been almost buried under a mass of written records, and I sometimes fear that it has to a great extent ceased to be an age of people like ourselves. It is already a quarry for antiquaries. An effort of imagination, which not everybody is inclined to make, is necessary if it is to be duly appreciated. On the other hand, it has suffered the usual fate of a generation which has just become the past, and has been condemned out of hand by its successor, as the eighteenth century was condemned by the nineteenth, and the "barbarousness" of the Shakespearean age by the "refinement" of the Drydenian. It is true that,

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as the years go on, the later generation becomes more sympathetic, for it is uneasily suspecting that it is itself being judged by *its* successor. The toes of its children are pressing upon its heel; and already, therefore, the Georgian censures of the Victorians are growing less virulent. Much sooner than they expected, those who called their parents fogeys are themselves being called fogeys; and a feeling of sympathy with those parents is stealing into their hearts. But there still remains a considerable amount of ignorance and prejudice; and some of the things said about the Victorian age seem, to the survivors of that age, more applicable to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar than to the days they recall so vividly. We hear of things that never were, of faults which, though they did exist, are as common now as then, of events which, though they happened, did not happen at all like *that*.

I have thought that something might be done to remove this prejudice if one could declare "that which he has seen and heard." I do not hope to remove it altogether. Justice will be done in time, but not yet. Nevertheless, I should like to say a little in pleading for arrest of judgment: and I trust to the candour of the jury for something like a fair hearing.

It is true of course that memory is treacherous. One constantly finds, on looking up old diaries, that one has misplaced a date, or ascribed to Mr. A what was really said by Mr. B. But I do not think the general impression often errs; and, erroneous

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or not, it is more accurate than ignorance or prejudice. A man who has been in a foreign country may make his mistakes, but he knows more about it, as a rule, than the man who has never been there. Anybody who considers the strange ideas harboured by stay-at-home foreigners about England and the English may form a notion of the strange conception of the Victorian age held by those who obstinately live in the present.

I propose, therefore, to say something about this much-maligned epoch, and to base what I shall say on things I have myself actually seen, or have heard from trustworthy witnesses. It may be necessary for a lawcourt to rule out hearsay testimony; the historian who should rule it out may perhaps exclude some falsehood, but the general effect of his work will be less exact than that given by many writers who are called inaccurate. Who would wish Herodotus to have always cross-examined his informants, and rigorously rejected every statement which could not pass judicial scrutiny? From his tales we get a truer picture of the age than from the most prosaically veracious inscriptions. Greek and Roman history would be poor without the anecdotes of Plutarch.

I count among my own memories, then, what I recall of the memories of others. I shall usually let the reader know when I have my doubts; and he may harbour as many doubts as he likes for himself. He will also bear in mind, without being bidden to do so, that these are only the recollections and ideas

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of one person, and that they do not profess to be anything more. In the Victorian age there were perhaps a hundred and twenty millions of people, of whom I have met but a few score, who may or may not have been typical. Let the reader keep those other millions in mind if he so chooses: but let him accept what I say of the scores as, within human limits, the truth.

The theme is indeed a vast one, not to be covered in twenty volumes, and cannot be more than superficially scratched in the following few pages. I am reminded of a sermon I once heard from a very distinguished Scottish minister, on Eternity. "It is of course impossible," began he, "to exhaust this subject in a single sermon": and he did not exhaust it, though he took a good slice out of eternity—eighty minutes—before he relinquished his attempt. Whole regions, of which I know a little, I shall have to omit, and there are wider regions still of which I know nothing.

I think, however, that I have some few qualifications for my ambitious task. For many years I was a schoolmaster, and was almost totally unconscious that old age was imperceptibly beginning to claw me in its clutch: for the constant succession of young boys kept me, in imagination, young. I felt myself just a little older than boys who were always of the same age, and the one or two hints that Time was doing his inevitable work were soon forgotten. I remember how, when I was about thirty, I came across in my Latin form the Virgilian

phrase *ruina cæli* : and I told the class that my own master, a lover of sounding words, had made us translate it "downrush of the welkin." "When I meet him," I added, "I will tell him that I have passed it on to you." There was a sudden hush of astonishment, and then a wondering question, "Sir, is he still alive?" "Yes," I replied sternly, "and a young man still." Another time I happened to mention that the Senior Master of the School began work in '76. "*Eighteen* seventy-six, sir?" said the boy I was addressing, as if a century or two could make little difference in the case of one so "beated and chopped with tanned antiquity" as that still energetic gentleman. It gave me a shock—for though I was the junior master I was not so much younger than he; and a sad fear came over me that I too, in the eyes of this boy, belonged to the age of Dr. Johnson.

But, as I say, these incidents made but slight impression on me: I still, perhaps in pathetic senile illusion, thought of myself as young: and I have not yet lost the feeling that I am a contemporary of a generation forty years junior to myself. I hope I am not altogether wrong. At any rate I know that in many respects I am not out of sympathy with the present age; and, if I try to arouse some sympathy with the Victorians, it will not be because I do not see some merits in the Georgians. I may seem a *laudator temporis acti*: but I can, I hope, appreciate the *tempus præsens*. At the same time, I recall the simple words of that typical

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Victorian poet, Longfellow—"Of the past the old man's thoughts were, and the maiden's of the future": and I cannot hope that I have escaped the operation of the universal law. I may see the past through a romantic mist: but remember that I *do* see it, like a kind of inferior Moses from the top of Pisgah, while the younger generation knows it only from the report of spies.

In any case, I can only say what I think, and, having spent many of my best and happiest years in the Victorian age, I do not quite like to hear it disparaged. I do not agree that those years were one long nightmare of priggishness, narrow-mindedness, self-complacency, hypocrisy, and goody-goodiness. Not all the parents were tyrants, keeping a tight hold on the latchkey, nor were all the children either smug and crawling little toadies or sullen rebels. Some Victorians were not the prudes of Swift's definition, "nice people with nasty ideas." I knew business men who were by no means flushed with success—nor was the success always due to circumstances with which they had nothing to do. A few of them were quite unconscious that they were the salt of the earth, and, though the middle class ruled, I knew members of it who had by no means middle-class minds. As for the literary men, look at their portraits: you will find *some*, but not all, resembling the famous portrait of Robert Montgomery, who "was doing his utmost to look like a man of genius and sensibility, without the success which his strenuous exertions deserved."



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I have been surprised, in recalling these former days, to discover with what vividness they return to me: so vividly, in fact, as almost to dim the present. "Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten." Like Goethe—to make a daring comparison—I have felt that what is seems to be far off, and that the past alone has reality.

*Ihr bringt mit euch die Bilder froher Tage,  
Und manche liebe Schatten steigen auf;  
Gleich einer alten, halbverklungenen Sage,  
Kommt erste Lieb' und Freundschaft mit herauf.*

And now for some of these "*liebe Schatten*."

## CHAPTER I

### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

WE OFTEN FORGET how closely linked, in many cases, are ages which seem far apart. The Jewish Rabbis were not slow to notice that Shem, in the tenth generation above Abraham, survived him by centuries, and might, according to the received chronology, have given him a first-hand account of the Flood. Our English annals have nothing quite as astonishing as that: Methuselahs are not common to-day. But we have our milder examples. Not to mention Old Parr and Henry Jenkins, Martin Routh, who was President of Magdalen College, Oxford, who kept himself alive by eating oranges because "they promoted longevity," and who died a centenarian in 1854, had seen Dr. Johnson eighty years before, and talked of him. There are a few people still living who have seen Routh. Coke of Norfolk was born in 1752 and lived till 1842: his son, I believe, lasted into the twentieth century, and two generations covered a hundred and sixty years. Dr. Butler of Harrow, to whom, as may have been guessed, I referred above, was born in 1773; his son, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, died in 1918. In 1927 Mrs. Haldane, mother of the Lord Chancellor, said,

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"The Reform Bill of 1832, which I well remember." Queen Victoria, as a baby, might have seen George III, who might have seen the Old Pretender, who was born in 1688. Nay, there was current in my youth a story of an old lady who, in 1884, happened to be talking to a man about Oliver Cromwell. "I have never," said he, "quite made up my mind about him." "Haven't you?" she replied: "my dear husband's first wife's first husband knew him well and liked him much." This statement, though surprising, will be found on consideration to be just possible.<sup>1</sup>

I have, as will have already been seen, had some opportunities of meeting old people who, if not able to carry their recollections as far as that lady, have yet been able to "jump o'er times," and to "consider the years of many generations." Fortunately, some of them were willing to talk, and, like the heroes of Agincourt, recalled the glories or disasters of the past. I have appropriated their reminiscences and made them in a sense my own.

Some of these reach back far beyond the Victorian age, and I desire to record them because they show, by contrast, what the Victorian age accomplished. You cannot judge an age fairly unless you know what went before it, any more than you can judge a man of science fairly unless you know what was the state of science when he began his work. Tried by this test, I think no years in history will be found

<sup>1</sup> When the centenary of 1812 was celebrated in Moscow, there were a dozen persons who *professed* to remember the burning of the city. Perhaps two really did remember it.

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more worthy of honour than those from 1837 to 1901.

I knew an old lady who well remembered the mourning for the death of the Princess Charlotte in 1817, which, as she described it, might have been like the Jewish "mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon." To her, of course, it appeared as a natural sorrow for the death of a young girl, a princess, and a mother: but I imagine that, in the better-informed, the sorrow was mingled with fear; for who knew what might happen when the succession was now open to a line of not too respectable princes, and might fall to the detested Duke of Cumberland himself? As so often with royal fortunes, the popular feeling was a mixture of personal sympathy and political calculation. It was this catastrophe that led to the compulsory marriages of the princes, and thus to the birth of Queen Victoria.

Compare this with the feeling at the *death* of the Queen. With all her faults of narrowness and obstinacy, she had rehabilitated the Crown, and made monarchy reputable and beloved. No one feared for the succession; Republicanism was now an academic theory and no longer a practical possibility. In appraising the Victorian age, we must not leave out of account the disappearance of one great cause of trouble. We have plenty of embarrassments to-day: anxiety about the dynasty, or about the general form of our government, is not one of them.

Or take something quite different. I know an old man who, when a boy at school, was regularly

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given a holiday to see a hanging<sup>1</sup>: in fact an execution, in 1820, was what a saint's day was in the Middle Ages. Nor were these holidays few. As a man was then liable to be hanged for stealing five shillings' worth of goods from a shop<sup>2</sup>—as, in fact, there were two hundred capital crimes in the Statute-book—an execution was a common sight, and, as any reader of Dickens or Thackeray knows, a brutal and disgusting one. The Victorian age saw the number of capital crimes reduced to three, and saw also—after a long struggle—the total abolition of public executions. What Dr. Johnson and many other philanthropists approved would now rouse the indignation of the lowest. This is but one of the improvements we owe to our despised grandparents. I will mention, at the risk of tediousness, another.

An old gentleman whom I knew well (I will call him Rutherford) could distinctly remember the illuminations for the battle of Cape St. Vincent in 1797. He was then seven years old, and—with the clear memory for long-past things which the very aged so often show—described them vividly when over ninety. Young as he was, he had felt the fearful anxieties of that most terrible year—the year in which the run on the banks compelled the Government to resort to paper money and thus impoverished the common people, the year of the

<sup>1</sup> "Two men," wrote Clough to his sister when he was ten years old, "were hung here for robbing an old clergyman." He writes as if he had seen the hanging.

<sup>2</sup> Nor must we ever forget the case of John Anderson, "who was hanged for stealing sixpence when starving, being his first offence."

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two naval mutinies, the year in which the Dutch fleet had only to sail and England would have been ruined, and when Duncan kept it in port by signaling to ships which were not there.<sup>1</sup>

Rutherford had good reason to remember that war, for it had all but destroyed his happiness and his career. In the year 1812, as he loved to tell—*hæc olim meminisse juvabat*—he had the narrowest of escapes. He had married a year or two before, he and his wife, in the common fashion of the time, being not forty between them. They had one child, and, as is not to be wondered at when such a war was raging, they were beginning to feel the pinch. It was therefore with great satisfaction that he received a letter from the Mayor of Sunderland, with whom he had some slight acquaintance, saying that if he would call on the Mayor, there might be some work for him. He set out, accordingly, to make the journey. The first ten miles he walked; for the second ten he received a welcome lift from a carter. After that he walked another five, and then managed to get a "bed and breakfast" in a cottage. Starting again early the next morning, he arrived in Sunderland a little after eight o'clock, too soon to think it desirable to call on the Mayor.

<sup>1</sup> It was shortly after this that Erskine celebrated our escape by a famous pun. During the war we were shut off, but for smuggling, from French wines, and port was drunk till men were both literally and metaphorically sick of it. At an assize-dinner the old judge happened to be of a stingy turn of mind, and rigidly rationed the Bar to what was then thought an inferior wine. Hints were given, and ignored, that champagne would be appreciated. At last, to change the topic, the judge said, "I wonder what the Dutch will do, now that their fleet has been shattered at Camperdown." "I suppose," said Erskine, "that like us they will be confined to port." The judge called the waiter, and ordered the champagne.

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It must be remembered that at that time comparatively few people had seen the sea. Even among the well-to-do boys of Rugby, in Dr. Arnold's time, not one in three had seen it, and the Doctor, who had been brought up at Cowes, had some difficulty at first in realising that the majority were incapable of understanding the sea-fights of Phormio and Nicias. Those who had seen it were inclined to boast about it, as to-day a travelled man often assumes a superiority over his neighbour. An inland carpenter in the forties who had actually experienced the great adventure, never wearied himself, though he *did* weary his friends, with the simple jest, "I went to Whitby and saw the sea; and now I have come back I see the saw." I often think that in this one point lies a chief difference between 1836 and 1936. Not till the arrival of the railway did the English become a really maritime people.

It was therefore natural enough that Rutherford, having an hour or two on his hands, should think to himself, "I will go down to the shore, and look at the sea: it will be a great thing to tell my wife about." "I was a fool nevertheless," he said to me seventy odd years later. For hardly had he feasted his eyes for five minutes on the amazing sight, when suddenly a band of sailors pounced upon him, and dragged him to a filthy inn where they shut him up in a room perhaps ten feet square. Leaving two of their number to keep guard, they went off in search of other victims.

His horror may be imagined. It was some time

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before he realised what had happened: and when he did so, the horror was doubled. He had heard of the press-gang, and knew that it showed no mercy. He was a Methodist, and he had read how often early Methodist preachers had been spirited away, and how for years their friends did not know what had become of them. What would become of his wife and child? He paced to and fro in the tiny dungeon, his heart torn with agony as he thought of *their* misery.

Had he but known it, things were still worse than he thought: for this impressment was for the war with America, in which the Admiralty, with its usual blindness, sent out frigates to meet ships which the Americans called frigates, but which were in reality ships of the line. In that war the *Macedonian* had to face the *United States*, of twice her strength, and was beaten to pieces in an hour; and the *Guerrière*, which was hardly fit to fight a sloop, met the *Constitution*, to suffer a like fate. Such sailors as survived those massacres did not always return. If they got the chance, they enlisted in the American navy, where they found better berths, better pay, and less ferocious officers than in his Britannic Majesty's service. Death or exile—this was the choice before Rutherford and hundreds like him.

Hour after weary hour went by, as he paced to and fro, backward and forward, "eating his heart with care and grief." At last, in what he thought must be the afternoon, he turned, in sheer apathy, toward the filthy window, to gaze in despair on



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the outer freedom which he was to lose for ever. With his coat-sleeve he wiped the dirt away—and hope returned. There, within twenty yards of him, was the one man he knew in Sunderland, and the one man who could save him. How he found the instantaneous resolution, he did not know; but in a second he had broken the glass and called for help.

The Mayor (who had been visiting the captain of the very ship for which Rutherford had been pressed) immediately turned, saw him, and came back. He knocked authoritatively on the door. "You can't take this man," he said; "he is a friend of mine": and Rutherford staggered out, free.

For some time they walked on together, the young man, still dazed, unable to utter a word even of thanks. Gradually, however, he recovered himself. They passed a church, and he found himself able to read the time on the clock.

"Sir," said Rutherford, "that clock must have stopped hours ago."

"Has it?" said the Mayor, pulling out his watch. "No, it's right—just twenty past ten."

Can we wonder that, in after years, recalling this and other horrors of war, Rutherford used to say, "War is too dreadful, there must never be another"? For the war of which he saw both the beginning and the end was in some respects more ruinous than the one we have recently passed through. The boys who fought at Waterloo were not born when the war began; and the famines, the discontents, the dangers, lasting through twenty-two

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years, were, in their cumulative effect, perhaps worse than the concentrated evils we suffered during four. As for the abomination of the press-gang, which had been illegal for two hundred years, but which had been winked at on the ground that ships must have men, even though they had to be swept up from hospitals and prisons,<sup>1</sup> it was the Victorian age that brought it to an end. No men were pressed for the Crimean War. Philanthropists like John Stuart Mill replied to the argument that necessity knows no law with the simple words, "Pay wages high enough and make the conditions decent enough, to attract men into the Navy, before you reason of the need": and the horrible system died out. Volunteers took the place of *forçats*, and the Navy has not suffered. If the Victorian age had accomplished nothing else than the abolition of this scandal, it would deserve to be remembered with gratitude.

I have another "memory" of the war, which I tell as it was told me. I have not been able to verify its details, but I have no definite reason for thinking it untrue.

Among the followers of Prince Charlie was a young Scotsman, the direct ancestor of my informant. Let us call him Patterson. Like the Prince himself, but unlike so many others, Patterson contrived to make his escape to France, where he married a

<sup>1</sup> The horrors endured in Anson's voyage of 1740 were partly due to the fact that his crews were recruited from hospitals and jails: many of the men were diseased when forcibly enlisted, and were therefore the ready prey of scurvy and dysentery.

Frenchwoman. His son he brought up in the nurture and admonition of Jacobitism. His first allegiance was to be to King James VIII; his second to the Bourbon dynasty. As part and parcel of these loyalties, a deadly hatred of England was also inculcated; but, as there was no knowing that England might not repent and recall the rightful king, the boy was taught his father's mother-tongue, and spoke it as well as any advocate in the lawcourts of Edinburgh.

The father died; King James died; and "King Charlie" himself, when Patterson the Second was about thirty years of age, faded out of existence. King Henry IX lived on, but merely as the Cardinal of York; and the Guelph usurper, now confident in his position, charitably allowed the "Pretender" a contemptuous pension. Even Patterson no longer hoped for a Restoration; his prime loyalty was now transferred to the Bourbons and Louis XVI.

As if to show what happens when men forsake their lawful rulers, no sooner was Prince Charlie dead than the first mutterings of the Revolution were heard. The Stuarts were to be followed in deposition and exile by the Bourbons. Years of chaos succeeded—men knew not which way to look or whom to serve; but Patterson never wavered. He was a Royalist to the backbone. And here began a subtle change in him. England too was Royalist; she was fighting to restore the rightful rulers. Perhaps she was not so bad as she had been painted. After all, George III was not responsible for the sins of his ancestors.

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The Directory came and passed; the Consulate was formed. Patterson had hopes of the First Consul. Might he not be waiting for an opportunity, when order was once restored, of bringing back the true heirs of Kingship, and of handing over to Louis XVIII a larger and more glorious dominion than even Louis XIV had ever ruled? Patterson waited, watched, began to doubt, and feared. Alas, his hopes were dupes, and his fears not liars. On May 18, 1804, the First Consul made himself Emperor: already Patterson had foreseen the treachery, and, filled with hatred of the traitor, he had signed in his heart a treaty of peace with England.

As everybody knows, despite the war, and despite all the regulations of both sides, there was constant smuggling between England and France. Sometimes, indeed, even in the days of the Continental System, Napoleon himself connived at it, as when in 1811 he allowed corn to flow into our famished country, or as when in 1812 he clothed his army for the Russian campaign with overcoats from Bradford. In 1804 there was no lack of opportunities for daring men who wished to cross: indeed, if a tradition recorded by Thomas Hardy is to be relied on, Napoleon himself slipped over to reconnoitre the Sussex coast, and to choose a point for the landing of his Army of England. At any rate, Patterson found his way over and contrived to obtain an interview with a member of the Cabinet.

"Do I speak English well?" he asked after a few preliminary words.

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"As well as I do," replied the minister, "though with a Scottish accent."

"I speak French equally well," he answered.

"And therefore you would be specially competent for intelligence-service?"

"Exactly."

"We have a service for you, but it is dangerous."

"Is it for the benefit of his most Christian Majesty?"

"Nothing could be more so."

"Then danger is honour."

"Spoken like a French gentleman," said the minister.

Less honourable "services" had been required of men by the Government in previous years. It is but too likely that British ministers had been cognisant of plots to murder Napoleon. The service asked of Patterson was not to kill the Emperor but to kidnap him: killing, in fact, was expressly forbidden, but short of that any means was authorised by which he could be seized and brought over. Should Patterson succeed in his perilous task, reward would be his: should he perish, his wife and child would be provided for.

He accepted the commission. A French uniform was provided for him, which he was to put on as occasion demanded; and a smuggling craft, on the very next dark night, conveyed him across.

The following few weeks, as may be imagined, were full of stress and anxiety. Repeatedly he found himself within a few yards of the Emperor, and once

or twice he was tempted to try his fortune. But always some accident intervened; and at last, the war of the Third Coalition calling Napoleon away, the chance vanished altogether. The army of England moved from Boulogne to find glory at Ulm and Austerlitz.

Patterson returned in dubious mood. He had failed and expected nothing but contempt and humiliation. Things, however, turned out differently. "We know your honesty and diligence," said the minister; "you have failed through no fault of your own. Your recompense shall be what it would have been had you succeeded. Other work will be found for you. You shall not want: and your son shall have a free education in one of our great public schools."

That son, thus educated and also familiarised with the French language by contact with his parents, became later a judge in one of the French colonies which we had captured in the war. It was *his* son, also a Colonial judge, who told me the story.

War has its own code of morality; and I suppose it is no worse to kidnap your chief enemy than to make him prisoner in battle. But the Victorian age saw a gradual change in the feeling towards France and Napoleon. The Nelson rule, "Stick to your guns and hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil" fell out of fashion; and Southey's ferocious Ode of 1814 ceased to be recited with the old applause.

## AS I REMEMBER

And now one word of a different kind; an anecdote belonging to a later time.

"There are two things," said an old gentleman of Birmingham to me in the eighties of the last century, "on which I specially pride myself. The first is that I was one of the hundred thousand who assembled in the Bull Ring to march on the House of Lords and destroy it if it persisted in throwing out the Reform Bill. The other is that I sang under the baton of Mendelssohn himself at the first performance of the *Elijah* in 1847."<sup>1</sup>

It has always seemed to me that this old gentleman was a very good type of the Victorian. He was a successful business man, but he showed no pride in *that*. He regarded his wealth but as a token of work well done. He was "self-made": but he was the very opposite of the Bounderby-like creature who, boasting that he was a self-made man, drew from his hearer the retort, "I am glad to hear it, sir; for it relieves the Almighty of a very serious responsibility." The two things which really interested my friend were the occupations of his leisure—politics and art. There may be dispute as to the actual merits of the particular politics and art. Radicalism is now no longer so powerful as it was, and Mendelssohn, by one of the changes in musical taste, is for the present under a cloud. But there can be no doubt that my friend was right to be passionately interested in art of some kind and in politics

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the famous saying of a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1850: "Music! a very good thing, I dare say, for a man who can't afford to keep a horse." The Victorian age changed that.

of some kind. It was men of his class that made the England we know. Beyond question, if such men had not been intensely devoted to politics, the Reform Act would never have been carried, and the enormous number of other reforms which that Act made possible would have had to wait for many years, or possibly have been waiting yet. Town Councillorships would have continued to be the perquisites of single families, and Tite Barnacles would have hung on to their lucrative sinecures; slavery might have gone on staining the scutcheon of our Empire, and the Combination Laws might still have blackened our Statute-books. There was then none of that contempt for politics and politicians which is so common to-day. And Victorian art, which we now so often speak of with disdain, was at any rate an improvement on what had gone before. Music, in especial, was rousing itself from slumber. "When I went round England the first time," said John Hullah, "multitudes could not sing in tune. When I went again some years later, such people were few." In higher musical spheres the improvement was equally manifest. I have known people who had heard Incledon and Braham. They told me of the liberties these singers took with their scores; of the "flash notes" which they introduced to show off their skill. They were followed by Sims Reeves, whose incomparable voice was devoted not to his own glory but to the due interpretation of the meaning of the composer. He sang what was written. The same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, was true



## AS I REMEMBER

of the pianists and violin-players: *bravuras* gradually died out, and faithfulness was substituted.<sup>1</sup> And though at the beginning of Victoria's reign, and for some time afterwards, both the words and the music of the popular operas and songs were of the feeblest kind, yet I think we can trace an almost steady improvement. "Poet Bunn" died, and fortunately found no successor. The sentimental ballad, the reproductions of which have recently caused so much amusement, did not, it is true, die out; but Weatherly is at any rate better than his predecessors: he rhymes, and he is grammatical. "Darby dear, we are old and grey" is certainly to be preferred to "Why did they dig Ma's grave so deep?" Much the same may be said not only of the painting but of the architecture: and, after all, I heard quite as severe criticisms of "Bubbles" and the Albert Memorial when they were new as can be heard now.

My old friend was far from unique. No mistake could be greater than to imagine that the Victorian business man was always absorbed in making money. I well remember the keen interest a grocer of my acquaintance took in the controversy between Freeman and Froude. He followed it as keenly as some people to-day follow the ups and downs of the Football League table: and he followed it with intelligence. He had read Froude's History from beginning to end. Another was a close student of

<sup>1</sup> Arabella Goddard, and her imitators, played chords *arpeggio*; the pianists of the next generation put an end to this.

## A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Shelley.<sup>1</sup> One curious incident still remains in my mind. I was travelling, in a somewhat crowded carriage, and next me was a man whom, from his conversation, I discovered to be a pork-butcher. The train drew up at a station, and he, determined not to allow the carriage to be yet more crowded, stood at the door and announced, "There's no room except on the rack." This was not quite true; there *was* room for one: and I said to him, "I fear you speak upon the rack, where men enforced do speak anything." His face lit up. "That's Portia," he said; "I read Shakespeare, or something about him, every night after business": and for the next two hours we carried on an animated conversation, in which he showed that his knowledge of the plays was both wide and exact. I have known others who were similarly masters of *Paradise Lost*, and one who could have passed a fair examination in Gibbon: while another, though he knew no Greek, was well acquainted with Herodotus in translation. These men, and many others, were in their small way what Hodgkin, Shorthouse, and Seeböhm were in a more distinguished fashion; sound men of business, who devoted their leisure to serious things. What made this more remarkable was the fact that their leisure was much less than that of their grandsons. They stuck to their shops and their offices, like the First Lord of the Admiralty, in *Pinafore*, to his desk.

<sup>1</sup> He tried to imitate his idol. "I see how bad I am in comparison," said he, "and that seems to show I have some taste." I told him how Dr. Johnson had written Latin verses after he had his stroke. "They were not good, but I *knew* they were not good"; and that showed him his brains were sound.

Nor was it only the masters who thus studied. The so-called working man was often equally diligent. A story which I have told elsewhere may be repeated here. In the fifties, in an out-of-the-way part of Durham, a band of countrymen, masons, farmworkers, thatchers, met regularly week by week to study philosophy. Their place of meeting was either the public-house or the cottage of one of their number. They began with Watts on *The Mind*, and went on to Locke on the *Understanding*, reading and discussing these books chapter by chapter. Next came Sir William Hamilton. Finally, hearing that Mansel, Hamilton's pupil, was bringing out his *Limits of Religious Thought*, they combined their resources; no fewer than ten copies of that by no means easy book were purchased, and the work was criticised as eagerly, if not as profoundly, as by John Stuart Mill himself.

A clergyman who was intimate with these men, and who later came to know some of the most famous conversationalists of the time, assured me that he had never known a talker equal to one of these country labourers. For wit, brilliance, and rapidity of repartee, set off by the expressive dialect which he used, he was unsurpassed. Unfortunately he was a slave to drink, and drank himself to death before he was forty.

Other men were hardly inferior. There was a pedlar, whom this clergyman remembered, who might have been Wordsworth's Wanderer reborn. He was no great reader, but in power of thought and depth of feeling he recalled the hero of the *Excursion*.

## A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

He was a mine of traditionary tales and legends,  
and from these his mind was made

*quick to recognise  
The moral properties and scope of things.*

Whenever he came round with his wares, the clergyman made a point of asking him in, and never failed to find his mental powers stimulated by the conversation which ensued. "If," he used to say, "there were men of this kind in Palestine, I do not wonder that the prophet should say, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' " This man had the gift of picking up knowledge from everyone he met, of arranging it in his mind, and of passing it on, improved and adorned, to others. Such men are rare to-day; in some measure education tends to restrict thought, and as Prospero feared might be the case with Ferdinand, "too light winning makes the prize light." We must beware of confusing knowledge with wisdom. A Cambridge scholar I knew, who had been too prone to associate intellectual power with academic distinction, told me that, when his duties called him into an industrial neighbourhood, his ideas received a sharp shock. He found a Lancashire cobbler whose mental capacity, totally untaught in the schools, astonished him. "I verily believe," said he, "that this man was intellectually the equal of a Senior Wrangler."

I could have confirmed my friend in his opinion. On a railway journey I once had a most interesting and instructive conversation on politics, social

matters, and even history, with a working man. Finally, I offered him my copy of *The Times*. "No use to me," he said, "I cannot read."

"Then you are older than I thought," I replied.

"Yes," he said, "I was twelve years old when the Act of 1870 was passed, and had to work thirteen hours a day for a long time after that. When I got some leisure, I found I could not learn to read—except, of course, to spell out shop signs and advertisements."

"Then how did you contrive to pick up your knowledge?"

"I talked and listened, as I have done to-day," he said with a smile.

It was the late Victorian age that began to try to turn the vast intellectual power, of which such men as these were types, to some use. Recognising, with Wordsworth, that there were "men endowed with highest gifts," which often ran to waste "through lack of culture and the inspiring aid of books," it determined to put at least the three R's at the disposal of all. This was one of the outstanding achievements of that despised era. It is true that, like all human schemes, this has in some respects gone agley: much unanticipated evil has accompanied the good that was intended: but few will doubt that, all deductions made, the total gain has been immense. The schoolmaster has been abroad to excellent purpose. Not only mentally but morally, the Act of 1870, with its many subsequent amendments, has revolutionised the country: and it was Victorians who started the process.

## CHAPTER II

### FORMS OF GODLINESS

BROUGHT UP AS I WAS in a theological family, I cannot remember a time when I was not interested in the varieties of religious belief and practice which can be seen in England. I recall looking on Unitarians with horror and on Roman Catholics with dread. On the study shelves were *Tracts for the Times*, *Essays and Reviews*, and scores of other orthodox or heretical works, into which I dipped, and on which I heard discussions. Religious controversy was all around me, and I was constantly meeting people who talked, quite naturally and freely, of their religious experiences. They saw no reason why they should not do so. Such experiences were as real to them as a walk to town. A doubt, or a temptation, was like a bad debt in business; an "illumination" was like discovering a new and lucrative customer. A man would come in and, after talking of the political situation, would pass with perfect simplicity to tell of an answer to prayer, or would say how much spiritual good he had derived from Channing's works, though it was a pity that Channing was not sound on the Trinity: and then it was debated whether, after all, Channing

might not be saved because of his "invincible ignorance" and his true devotion.

But I think the most noteworthy phenomenon of all was the calm and convinced manner in which "dispensations" were spoken of: that is, in which it was taken for granted that God was always working, even in the smallest affairs of life. No doctrine was further from these people's minds than Leibniz's "Pre-established Harmony." God had not made the clock, wound it up, and left it alone: He was constantly attending to it, and "setting" it almost every hour of the day. Nothing, however insignificant, no person, however obscure, but was the subject of His personal care. If you found a lesson hard, you prayed, and God would make it easy.<sup>1</sup> If you were tired on a walk, you prayed again, and vigour returned. Two boys were swimming. One had cramp and sank. The other swam after him, felt his strength failing, prayed, recovered energy, and pulled his friend out. "Not by might nor by power."

This, of course, was an inheritance, scarcely impaired, from an earlier day, and was by no means peculiar to one form of Christianity. There were, it is true, some real or so-called Christians who would have none of it. Readers of Sydney Smith's *Essays* will remember how his wrath was stirred by the "interferences" and "special Providences" which, according to the *Evangelical and Arminian Magazines*,

<sup>1</sup> "You may pray to pass," said a schoolmaster to his boys; "but it is, as you would express it, beastly sneakish to pray to be above others."

## FORMS OF GODLINESS

were almost daily incidents in the lives of vast numbers of his fellow-countrymen. Stories of this kind were told constantly, and circulated by thousands monthly in those journals. One of them will do for many. "A young man is stung by a bee, upon which he buffets the bee with his hat, uttering at the same time the most dreadful oaths and imprecations. In the midst of his fury, one of these little combatants stung him upon the tip of that unruly member (his tongue), which was then employed in blaspheming his Maker. Thus can the Lord engage one of the meanest of His creatures in reproving the bold transgressor who dares to take His name in vain." Sydney exhausts himself in quoting and ridiculing tales like these; and even the "Strictures" of Mr. John Styles did not induce him to moderate either his opinions or his language.

These essays were written in 1808 and 1809. Such "interferences" had been common from the beginning of Christianity; and Sydney might have found thousands of examples, on which to vent his sarcasms, in the records not merely of the Evangelicals, but of every Christian denomination, from the Apostolic age downwards.<sup>1</sup> "Judgments" and "Providential Deliverances" adorn the lives of saints and heresiarchs alike. Nor did Sydney's

<sup>1</sup> In 1842, *Tract 90* was the subject of episcopal reprobation, and nearly all the Bishops devoted considerable portions of their charges to censure of it. Two of them died just before they could deliver their charges: and both Newman and Pusey regarded these deaths as divine judgments. "It looks," said Pusey, "like Thus far shalt thou go." It would be easy to find instances of this feeling in every branch of the Christian Church, from the Roman Catholic to the Abyssinian; nor is it dead yet.



denunciations put an end to them. They crowded the whole reign of Victoria, though they were rarer in the second half of it. The Queen herself, as I have a thousand times heard people say, was plainly the favourite of Providence, for her public appearances almost invariably enjoyed good weather.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, it was the anger of Providence that sent the cholera, and when Palmerston suggested improvements in drainage rather than days of humiliation he was blaspheming. It was the righteous vengeance of Providence that made Maria Marten's mother dream that she must search the barn where the girl's body was; thus not only bringing a murder to light, but also giving believers an argument in favour of Pharaoh's prophetic dreams.<sup>2</sup> Providence watched over the greatest events and the smallest. It gave—with the help of Moltke's strategy—victory to the pious Germans over the irreligious French. "It has pleased Providence to bless me with seven children"—thus ran a letter I once saw from a man who wanted an increase of salary.

I have heard, in fact, scores of stories like those recorded by Sydney Smith, many of them at first hand, and all attested by credible witnesses. In very wide circles, indeed, the age of miracles was not past: warnings and wonders were all round. One

<sup>1</sup> Many letters on the fine weather experienced by George V during his Jubilee show that this idea still flourishes. A story was current in my youth of a Yorkshire outdoor meeting organised to pray for rain. A very violent thunderstorm interrupted the proceedings. "Nay, Lord, this is ridic'lous," said one of the throng.

<sup>2</sup> It is so applied by John Kitto in his *Daily Bible Illustrations*, the most popular theological work of the fifties.

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of the saintliest people I ever knew was an elderly serving-woman. I happened once to call on her, carrying a paper bag of apples. Just at her door the bag split, and one or two of the apples rolled noisily down the seven front steps. "I have just had a 'token' vouchsafed me," said she when I entered: "there was a sound repeated seven times." I do not know whether she was vexed or relieved to hear the simple explanation. "If it comes three times," said the May Queen, "I'll take it for a sign." There were multitudes of people in that generation, like the May Queen, seeking for signs and getting them. When others failed, they found them in "coffins and cradles," in the death-watch, in the howling of a dog, or in more conspicuous events. I knew an old gentleman who well remembered the comet of 1811, which was so brilliant that you could read at midnight. Such a wonder must portend something, and clearly something great—that is, it must have to do with Napoleon Bonaparte. Exactly what it meant was not revealed till later: Napoleon was going to conquer Russia. A little later, "the sad augurs mocked their own presage": it meant that Russia was to conquer *him*. But that it meant *something*, few doubted, any more than their ancestors had doubted, when the same comet appeared and foreboded the battle of Hastings.

"Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." I am not sure that the present age is less superstitious than the Victorian. Cricketers, I am told, believe in lucky days; tennis-players carry mascots; and as

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I walk along the streets I see all sorts of well-dressed and apparently educated persons turning aside lest they should go under a ladder. We hear, it is true, less of Providence, though whether that betokens real progress is another matter: and it may be that, if we went to the right places, we should find "Providential" tales still flourishing as of old. In fact, if one had to choose, I am not convinced that I should not prefer this belief in special Providences to the credulity shown, for example, during the War, when people prognosticated the results of battles from the vagaries of planchette, or to the total disregard of the laws of probability which is so often seen in the players or spectators of games.<sup>1</sup> It is better to believe that you are under the care of a watchful Providence than that you can control chance by carrying a stone in a particular pocket. And though, after Christ's declaration on the Tower of Siloam, it is inexcusable to look out for "judgments" on sinners, it is no less inexcusable to fancy that the turning of a coin will alter a run of ill-luck at Monte Carlo or at a London bridge-table. No one who holds such ideas has a right to be surprised that tales of "dispensations" flourished in Victorian times.

<sup>1</sup> How often do we hear people say, "It has happened twice, it can't happen a third time." If a penny has fallen heads a dozen times running, the chance is still a half that it will fall heads the next throw.

I remember quite well how, when W. G. Grace had made 344 against Kent, and 177 against Nottingham, the Yorkshiremen, who were to be his next opponents, said, "He can't make a third big score." He made 318 not out. But cricketers still argue in the same fashion after sixty years. The Yorkshiremen had at least this to say for themselves, that even the Leviathan might tire. *Coins* do not tire, however often you toss them.

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Be that as it may, flourish they did; and many of them would stagger the scepticism even of a Huxley. I have met with no scientific explanation of the career of the famous philanthropist Müller of Bristol, a career which I heard discussed a hundred times, from every possible point of view. His Home must have cost thousands a year to maintain, and he had no resources of his own. He never sent out an appeal for funds; he hardly ever even told people in private that he needed money. No methods of advertisement, in fact, of any kind whatever did he use. He prayed, and that was all. Scores of times he was reduced to his last sovereign; he turned to the Epistle of James, read the passage about the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, and fell on his knees. Next day, or within the next week, would arrive a cheque, usually from someone of whom he had never heard, and the Home, a centre of noble work, went on.<sup>1</sup>

When he died, all this, which had already been known to many, became known to millions more, and explanations were propounded in scores, none—except Müller's own—in the least satisfactory. The most curious was that put forth by W. T. Stead, who had then become a convinced spiritualist. Müller, said Stead, had established a kind of telegraphic *rapport* with heaven. When in need, he telegraphed to the Throne, which instantly telegraphed back to people of means, informing them

<sup>1</sup> Exactly similar experiences, equally true and equally wonderful, are told of the Rev. W. H. Lax of Poplar.

of Müller's requirements. Heaven was, in fact, a central bureau. Had Stead lived to-day, he might have used the metaphor of the British Broadcasting Company, which receives and transmits S.O.S. messages: except only that the word "metaphor" hardly does justice to the strange literalism of language in which he clothed his theory. Others spoke of telepathy: Müller had, they supposed, in a very high degree, the power of forcing his thoughts into the minds of persons, over any distance however great, especially when these persons were in sympathy with him: and suggestions were drawn from the astonishing performances of such people as Alfred Capper or the Zancigs, who seemed capable, with or without physical contact, of reading thoughts with extraordinary exactness. There seems, in truth, to be no limit to such powers of thought-transmission: examples were given of two brothers, one in Australia and one in England, who suddenly, at the same moment, were inspired to recite the same passage of poetry.

Whatever the solution, the facts of Müller's life were as I have described them, and the witnesses are above suspicion. It was inevitable that believers in Providence should adduce them as further proofs of their faith, as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Other incidents, which I often heard similarly adduced, are less convincing.<sup>1</sup> Many of them admit

<sup>1</sup> "It's Providence," said an old man to a woman, trying to console her for a serious misfortune. "Ay, it's Providence," said she; "but I reckon

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of a simple natural explanation, and can be accounted for by the ordinary laws of probability. When Henry Wainwright, who had kept the body of his victim Harriet Lane in his house for a year, was compelled to change his residence, he wrapped the remains up in a parcel, and with incredible folly (perhaps, as many held, this too was the working of a divine Nemesis), gave it to a man named Stokes to carry it to a cab. Stokes did his bidding; but a moment or two later, as he asserted, heard a heavenly voice saying, "Follow that parcel." He followed it, and the police followed *him*. Wainwright was convicted and hanged. It is pretty plain that here Providence was acting through the olfactory sense.

That Providence watches over babies and drunkards is an observed phenomenon: but here again it is open to the doubter to find objections. A pious lady, talking of a tremendous storm which had blown in the window-frame and a number of bricks in her baby's nursery, assured me that the bricks fell all around the child's cot, that the fragments of glass were scattered all over the room, that the wooden frame had formed an arch over the cot, and that the baby had not been so much as grazed. "There was the hand of Providence," she said: and one did not care to disturb her faith. It was open to the sceptic, however, to doubt. When the kid, in Byron's "Mystery," is stung by a reptile, and cured by antidotes,

there's One Above will have something to say about it." The blasphemous Jeremy Bentham used to remark, when things went agley, "Just like Provvy."

AS I REMEMBER

*Behold, my son, said Adam, how from evil  
Springs good.*

Cain, or rather Byron himself, answered nothing,  
but

*thought that 'twere  
A better portion for the animal  
Never to have been stung at all :*

and similarly some might think that it would have been still more providential if the window had withstood the hurricane.

Too much, perhaps, was sometimes attributed to Providence. A clergyman I knew, six feet two in height, and weighing perhaps nineteen stone, was attacked by a diminutive lunatic in a railway-carriage. "*By the Grace of God,*" said he, "I sat on him all the way from Crewe to Warrington." His hearers wondered how much of the lunatic was left after the experience. Providence was on the side of the big battalions.

Other stories I leave to the reader to explain. A Cornish girl (Cornwall has been the home of mystery ever since the ghosts of the dead used to sail thither from Brittany) was betrothed to a miner. One morning, very early, she woke up suddenly with the conviction that he was, at that moment, in great danger. She leapt from her bed, fell on her knees, prayed passionately to God to save him—and what she took for an actual voice assured her that saved he would be.

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At that very hour there was an explosion in the mine, and many were killed. The young man was thrown into a corner, and, when he came to himself, noticed that two fragments of rock had fallen above his head so exactly that they might have been set there by human hands. He had room to stand, and enough air came in for him to breathe. He felt no fear; a sense of absolute confidence descended on him. His thoughts travelled to the girl, and it seemed to him that he was able to send her a message that he was safe. After many hours the rescuers, guided by his voice, took him out, hungry but entirely unharmed.

A "local preacher," also a Cornishman, himself told me the following story. One Sunday morning he was preparing to walk the four miles to his "appointment," when a lady came in panting. "Thank God you have not yet gone," said she. "I want you to take this sovereign and this basket of food to old Mr. So-and-so. It will mean half a mile out of the way and half a mile back. Can you do it?"

"Easily," he replied.

"At two o'clock this morning," she went on, "I woke up with a voice in my ears, saying that he needed help: and I *must* send something to him."

The preacher set forth at once. When he reached the old man's cottage, he found him, like the woman of Sarepta, gathering a few sticks to light a fire. "Here," said the preacher, "is some food for you, and money. Mrs. — has sent it."



## AS I REMEMBER

The old man called to his wife. "Come down and see: I told you the Lord would not let us starve." The woman came down. "Oh, sir," she said, "he was sure, and I doubted. At two o'clock this morning he was praying, and he said the Lord had told him it was all right, but I wouldn't believe."

The preacher went on his way, and chose a new text for his sermon: "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Providence sometimes uses curious means. In a country inn, one night, a number of men were boasting of their courage, and one youth in particular was as thrasonical as Cæsar himself. "It's nearly twelve o'clock," said another; "I bet you a sovereign you daren't go alone to the Haunted Pool." The young man hesitated, but his honour was at stake, and a sovereign was worth having. "Whistling aloud to keep his courage up," he set forth. He knew the way, but things were different at night from what they were by daytime: the trees were vocal with demonic whispers, and the air supernaturally alive. All the terrors of the next world assailed him, and a hundred times he all but turned back. What sustained him he could not tell; but somehow his feet went on, even when his will drew in the opposite direction. At last he reached the pool; and there on the edge were two struggling figures, a man and a girl. He came nearer—the man had the girl by the throat, and

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was endeavouring to throw her into the water. At this all the youth's fears vanished; he was not afraid of human beings. He rushed forward with a loud shout; the man, perhaps thinking that the haunters of the pool were in league against him, flung the girl to the ground and fled incontinently; and thus a murder was prevented, "God can use even a bet for His purposes," said saintly believers.

Sometimes, alas, Providence acts, but acts too late. Few stories are better authenticated than that of the Cornishman, Mr. Williams, who, in 1812, saw repeatedly in dreams a scene in which, in a crowded hall, a wild-looking man was pointing a pistol at another. Every detail of the scene was so vivid that after the third dream Williams realised what the place was—it was the lobby of the House of Commons. Without delay he went up to London, and arrived just in time to find the members of the Houses in wild excitement. Bellingham had just shot Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup>

Equally unsuccessful was another dream-warning. A gentleman, Mr. A, was the superintendent of a Sunday-school, and the annual school "treat" was imminent. A train had been chartered to take the children into the country. The night before, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Holland was a witness of this murder. Seeing the consternation on the faces of his neighbours, he said to the man next him, "Do I look pale like everybody else?" and then he remembered how, when the death of Clarence was reported, Buckingham said, "Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest?" There is not much that Shakespeare has not noticed.

When Macbeth, without being told, knew that his face was blanched with terror, this showed the force of his imagination.

## AS I REMEMBER

A dreamt three times that he was at the station with the children and was marshalling them into their places. He then went to his own carriage, and saw on the window, where he expected to see "Reserved" stuck up, the word "Death." He told his wife, who urged him not to go: but he laughed at her fears, and said, in the true British spirit, that it did not become the leader to fail his followers. At the right time, accordingly, he went down to the station, his wife insisting on accompanying him. There were the children; as in the dream, he guided them to their places. Then to his own carriage—there was "Reserved," harmless and welcoming. He entered and said a smiling farewell to his wife. The train left the station; he continued leaning out of the window, still smiling encouragement to her as she waved to him. Just as he was passing out of her sight, a balk of timber on a luggage-train, which was standing on the neighbouring rail, slipped, struck him on the head, and killed him instantly.

Providence, however, is jealous of meddling. It does not like to be pestered. As in the days of Juvenal, it may, if too persistently besought, answer the prayer and, as it were, mutter "Have it your own way then, and take the consequences." A story, literally true or not, was repeatedly told me and guaranteed by the strongest asseverations. The child of a religious mother was dying; the physicians gave her no hope. She ought to have resigned herself to the Will of God, but she could

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not. She rebelled, and with all the force of a stubborn nature urged the Deity to spare her child. Her prayers, said my informants, were more like remonstrances, nay more like threats, than humble petitions: they amounted to an implication that if *her* will were not done, she would throw off her allegiance.

“*Vota numinibus exaudita malignis*”; the child *did* recover. He grew up, but strange in his ways, a little odd, half a “natural.” When he was twenty years old, the trial of Palmer drew the unhealthy attention of the world. The lad read every word of it with avidity. It preyed on his mind, deprived him of sleep, and filled all his thoughts. Strychnine became his obsession; somehow he contrived to get hold of the poison, and used it in exactly the same way as Palmer had used it on his victims. But he had less skill or luck than his model; his very first murder was at once detected. That he was not sane is certain; but in those days less attention than now was paid to the plea of insanity. He was convicted and hanged; his unhappy mother, who was still alive, bitterly repenting her fatal interference with the divine wisdom. Providence had known better than she what was in store. It was not long before remorse and grief brought her to the grave.

*Si consilium vis,  
Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus, quid  
Conveniat nobis rebusque sit utile nostris.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “If you will take my advice, you will allow the gods to weigh out what is good for us.”

The moral of this story may be illustrated, in the converse, by another. A lady whose husband, a saintly and diligent Churchworker, was dying, harboured the passionate hope that "the prayer of faith might save the sick," and started to write letters asking for the intercessions of the various congregations with which her husband had been connected. Every time she did so, however, she felt an invisible hand resting on her own and preventing her from putting pen to paper. When this had happened several times, she realised, with full conviction, that it was not the will of God that the patient *should* recover; and, with a tremendous effort, she at length brought herself to *consent* that the higher Will should be done.

When all was over, the doctors said to her, "After all, it was better that he should die; for if he had lived, it could only have been as an utterly broken man; he would have lingered on as a useless phantom, a burden to himself and to all around him." Amid all her loneliness and grief, she felt that Providence had been wise, and had, in its infinite mercy, intervened to save her from a yet deeper sorrow: and her first prayer was one of gratitude.

It would be possible to multiply such stories indefinitely; for everyone who mingled in pious Evangelical circles heard them almost daily: those that found their way into print were but a small fraction of those that were told and believed. Few indeed, even to-day, if they could see and hear

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the narrators, would be tough enough in their scepticism to doubt them.

Before the days of motors and bicycles, ministers who could not afford a horse had often to walk miles to their churches. A young minister, having finished the service in a country chapel, set out to walk home; and, as it happened, had to carry with him the collection-money. His way led him along a road known by the sinister title of Dead Man's Lane; and he owned that, as he entered this thoroughfare, he felt a quickening of his pulse, which quickened still more as he heard unpleasant sounds on the other side of the opposite hedge and every now and then detected, through the bushes, crouching human figures. He kept a wary eye on the road, grasped his stick firmly, and prepared to defend himself to the last: "but also," said he, "I committed myself to Almighty God."<sup>1</sup> After this, he somehow felt safe, though he noticed that, when he moved rapidly, the figures kept pace with him, and when he slowed down they also fell back. At last he reached the end of the lane and turned into the main road. The welcome sound of vehicles reached his ears; there were houses and human companionships within reach; and he walked on confidently and securely.

Some months later, a message reached him. A

<sup>1</sup> "What should you do in a thunderstorm?" was one of the questions in (I think) *The Child's Guide to Knowledge*, one of the many Socratic elementary school-books of the early Victorian age. (*Mangnall's Questions* and Blair's *Preceptor* are still to be seen on second-hand book-stalls.) The answer was, "Draw my bed into the middle of the room, commit myself to Almighty God, and go to sleep."

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man had been arrested for robbery, and wished to see him in the prison. He went, and found the man in the cell. "Do you remember," said the man, "walking along Dead Man's Lane one night some time ago?"

"I shan't forget it," he replied.

"Well," said the man, "we had watched you from the chapel, and knew you had money on you."

"Not much," said the minister smiling.

"Enough for us," answered the man: "and we meant to get it."

"I knew that," said he: "I both heard and saw you."

"So we saw, too, for you looked our way again and again."

"But why did you do nothing?"

"Why, don't you know? Every time we thought of rushing out, an enormous hound came from under your hedge, and trotted at your heels. Didn't you hear him?"

"I knew nothing about it," said the minister; "but I *did* know that God was with me." The two then knelt in prayer.

Another minister, whom I well knew, was saved in a different manner. Riding home from service (also with the collection-money in his pocket) he was overtaken by a masked horseman—perhaps the last of the old-fashioned highwaymen—who, in approved style, gave him the choice of his money or his life. Never, doubtless, had the man

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met a victim of such a kind. Quite calmly and fearlessly the minister replied, "I have just come from speaking of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come. I have told the people that sin, even if it escapes punishment in this world, is certain of retribution in the next. There is an eye which sees in darkness, and from which no mask can hide the face. On the other hand, if a man repents, there is always forgiveness. The penitent thief is, at this moment, with Christ in Paradise."

The two rode side by side, in absolute silence, for many minutes. They came to a ford (which I have seen), and passed through it. Then, as they climbed up the bank, the man said, "There is a lot in what you say, sir."

"There is all truth in it," replied the minister. "Judgment for the sinner, mercy for the repentant, that is God's own message. Go back to your home, change your way of life, pray for forgiveness, and you will be washed as clean as a pebble in that river."

As they emerged into the open, the man said, "I should like to shake hands with you, sir." They shook hands, and with a "Thank you" on one side and a "God bless you" on the other, they parted. "Not till then," said the minister in telling the tale to me forty years afterwards, "did I feel the slightest terror."

A similar but even more striking story may here be added, and the more appropriately because it is a side-light on an historic event. Had Bolitho known



it, I feel sure that he would have worked it into his eloquent book, *Murder for Profit*, in which he discusses with such force and insight the mental outfit of certain typical criminals.

Not many murderers have permanently enriched the English language; but this has been the fate of the senior partner in the firm of Burke and Hare. So long as the Oxford Dictionary shall be consulted his name will live; and so long as Ministers use the closure they will be accused of burking discussion. To adorn at once the Chamber of Horrors and the columns of the Oxford Dictionary is given to few. Nay, by one of those ironies of which history is full, the name of a bad and little man is indissolubly linked with that of a great and good one; for does not Lockhart tell us that, when Scott was chased by a Radical mob, the cry was "Burke Sir Walter"?

Burke and Hare were arrested in 1828. Hare turned approver, and Burke was hanged a few months later. There is no need here to repeat the tale, which is sufficiently well known. It is enough to say that, finding body-snatching from graveyards too laborious and dangerous, the two men used to smother their victims, and sell the corpses to the surgeons—at least one of whom, Dr. Knox, was severely censured for asking no questions as to where the supply came from. But the following story, though it has been told before, is not, I think, universally familiar, and may be worth retelling. I believe it to be true almost to the minutest detail. The son of the person concerned, Mr. Samuel, was

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one of my earliest schoolmasters, a friend of Viscount Bryce and his brother Archibald, a scholar, a gentleman, and a man of unimpeachable veracity. It may be added that he was of a peculiarly sensitive and susceptible disposition: a character which, if he inherited it from his father, may have some bearing on the explanation of the story.

In 1828 a young minister arrived in Edinburgh. He was absolutely unknown in the city, having come from a distance, and having never been there before. On the Sunday morning he preached his first sermon, in the evening his second. At the close of this service, when he was preparing to depart—when, in fact, everybody but himself and the caretaker *had* departed—a young girl appeared at the door. She seemed agitated; and it was obvious both from her dress and from her manner that she was not of the most respectable class. Thinking that she had perhaps been one of his audience, and wished to consult him on spiritual matters, the minister asked what he could do for her.

“There is a dying man in such and such a street,” she replied; “and he wants to see a minister.”

“All right, I will come,” said he. “Show me the way.”

“No, not now,” she answered. “Not till eleven o’clock.”

“But why not now? If he is dying, he should be seen at once.”

At this the girl, showing traces of embarrassment, started on a long rigmarole which the young man

found it hard to follow. It would not be easy to welcome him—the man's friends would be crowding the house, the children would be awake—this reason, the other reason: the only thing certain was that it would be impossible for him to go till the hour mentioned. He hesitated, but finally he said, "Where is the street, and what is the number?"

With more intelligence than he had expected, she gave him precise and clear directions. He did not exactly promise to go, but he left her with the impression that she might expect him.

For the next few hours he was in a state of uncertainty. The more he thought of the girl's manner the less he liked it. And yet she *might* be telling the truth: if the man *was* dying it was his duty to be there. Nor ought a Christian minister to shirk that duty through fear. Accordingly, at twenty minutes to eleven, he put on his hat and went out.

It was a dark night, dimly lit by the feeble lamps of a hundred years ago—before, in Sir Walter Scott's phrase, even London was lit up with "cold smoke." The streets were silent with the deadly stillness of a Scottish Sabbath. As he went along he could almost hear his heart beat; and when he turned into the street that the girl had named to him, the sense of something unholy became almost overpowering. By a mighty effort, however, he constrained his feet to follow his will; though he was sure that even by daylight this street would have been one to be avoided. At length he reached the house, the number of which he contrived with some difficulty to

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read. The door was flush with the street. He raised his hand to knock—but I am wrong—he tried to raise his hand, and could not. Once again he tried, and failed. Was he paralysed? He struck his hand on his thigh, easily and naturally. He tried the left hand, with the same result; he could strike his left thigh, but no more.

Mr. Samuel was a believer in special Providences. Something beneficent was forbidding him to enter that house. He stood there in dead silence for what seemed a long time, but may have been but a few seconds, and prayed for guidance. Nor was the answer doubtful. A voice, distinct and imperative, though heard only by the inner ear, bade him "Depart." He turned, and with noiseless footsteps left that house, and that unholy street, rapidly behind him.

A month or two later, and the whole country was ringing with the names of Burke and Hare. Mr. Samuel had his own thoughts when he heard that that house had indeed been accursed: but he kept his thoughts to himself. He was not, however, prepared for what happened. The miserable Hare, having saved his life by betraying his accomplice, was being held in prison until some means might be found for spiriting him away; for it was the fixed resolve of the populace to tear him to pieces. He was still there when a message reached Mr. Samuel that Hare would like to see him. This time he obeyed willingly: who knew what stirrings of divine grace might not be agitating the poor sinner? It

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might be that God was using *him* as the means of saving a soul.

The wretched cowering creature only half rose when Samuel entered, and clumsily took the hand which the minister held out to him. It was some time before either spoke. Then, "You remember that girl who came to you at the chapel?"

"I shall never forget her," replied Samuel.

"Ah, then she *did* come after all. We thought she was cheating us."

"Yes, she came."

"And told you the way?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you come?"

"I *did* come."

"Why, we were waiting for you with the bolsters and mattresses just inside the door—and we heard nothing. We listened for the knock, and you didn't knock. You see, we knew you had only just come to Edinburgh, and might not be missed for some time. We had it all planned, but something hindered."

"Yes," said Mr. Samuel: "something *did* hinder. A Power that moves mysteriously saved you from *one* crime at least."

Hare put his face between his hands and groaned aloud.

And now for a story into which Providence, except so far as it controls all things, does not enter. A missionary's wife, whose husband had recently started for India, was sitting in her drawing-room when a gentleman was announced. After

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the first greetings, he said, "Well, your husband has arrived." "How do you know?" "Saw him this morning, at such a time exactly."

The lady knew the man, and his powers of second-sight; accordingly she showed no surprise. She took a pen and some paper, and examined him like a counsel in court. "When did you see him? Who first greeted him? What was he like? Who next, Indian or European? Sun shining, or overcast?"—and any other question she could think of. His answers to every one she carefully noted down. "Now," she said, "what is the date? and let us calculate the exact time it would be in Calcutta when you saw it here." All this was done: and then both dismissed the subject from their minds and talked of other things.

So soon as he had gone, she wrote to her husband, asking him to answer the questions she had put to her friend. His reply came in six weeks; and his answers were in every case the same as those the second-sighted man had given.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing is this. The story was told in my presence by Mr. A to Mr. B. Mr. A gave no names; he simply said, "A man I knew," "a missionary's wife." When he had finished, Mr. B said, "I know the man you mean."

"Who?"

"Mr. Smith of Aberdeen; he has done for me several things just like that."

"It *was* Mr. Smith of Aberdeen," said Mr. A.

Many other such stories I could tell: for example,

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of Mrs. Jones, who said to her husband one afternoon, "Mrs. Brown is just leaving her house; I wonder whether she is coming to us." Mrs. Brown's house was quite invisible from Mrs. Jones's; in fact there was a hill between. "I think she is," said Mrs. Jones five minutes later; "for she has turned down the road to her left": also an invisible point.

"You'd better get ready for her," remarked her husband, who was used to her ways. She went out, ordered tea for three to be prepared, changed her dress, and met Mrs. Brown at her garden-gate. Such a lady would have little use for television, though her powers, it is true, acted irregularly. She never knew *when* they would exert themselves, but when they did, they never deceived her.

Some of the beliefs I have mentioned may appear superstitious to the present generation—though less so, I think, than to the generation which was born in the sixties. There has been, at least in some quarters, a reaction against rationalism in the last thirty or forty years; and one meets to-day more people than before who believe in the "miraculous" or the "supernatural." Feeling is exalted to a position usually denied to it by intelligent persons in the later Victorian days, when Huxley, with his eulogies of universal scepticism, and his sarcastic essays on the Gadarene swine, had many followers. Possibly Huxley's own ideas were a form of superstition; the very revolt against credulity may be credulous. Vulgarly, said Oscar

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Wilde, is the behaviour of other people; and a superstition is a belief you do not happen to share. The beliefs I have described are not exactly those commonly held to-day; but they may, for all we know, be none the worse for that. Every society and every age has its own pet fancies, to which it cleaves in defiance of evidence; and the present is no exception. I have already referred to some which our "enlightened" time holds with tenacity—the belief in mascots, in Monte Carlo "systems," and other nonsense; not to mention its almost inexpugnable fancy that the Victorians were gloomy, hypocritical, and self-complacent. What people want to believe they will believe.

Much, of course, is scarcely half believed. People refuse, but only as a precaution, to sit down thirteen at a table: it may, after all, be unlucky: and for a similar reason they will not, if they can help it, go under a ladder. When I was in Russia before the Revolution, I was staying with one of the most intelligent and highly cultivated men I have ever known. Moscow at that time suffered from a pest hardly less horrible than an Eastern plague of locusts, and more persistent. You could go nowhere without encountering a swarm of beggars, who were thickest perhaps in the church porches. My friend, when starting for a walk, always filled his pockets with kopecks. On one occasion, when we had been specially annoyed by these creatures, and when his store of coins had been seriously depleted, I asked him why he gave at all. "You



don't know the language," he said. "If you did, you would know that their curses, when you don't give, are frightful; and," he added with a half-smile, "who can say that there isn't something in them?" The reader could supply innumerable parallels from his own experience. I should, for instance, imagine that almost everybody has a sneaking belief in Nemesis. Let a man boast as to what he is going to do in his next cricket-match, and we *expect* him to be out first ball. And we all understand a German who says "*Unberufen*" when he has uttered an unlucky phrase: in similar circumstances we do not use the word, but we hope that the gods will take no notice.

It would, in fact, be dangerous to assert that *any* superstition, however foolish or unpleasant, is actually dead. Every now and then one comes across the most astonishing cases of survival of old fancies which one might have thought had perished centuries ago. A year or two since, I was walking in a country village. The railway passed within a mile of it, and there was a Government school in the street, not to mention a church and a parsonage close at hand. All the apparatus, in fact, for spreading enlightenment was there in full vigour. None the less, what I heard two people saying might have been said in 1450. One of them was complaining of his lumbago. "Easy," said the other; "catch a mole, kill him, cut off his tail, and hang him head-downwards on your back; that cured *me*." After that, I was not surprised to read in the papers that,

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in Ireland, a family, troubled by a witch with the evil eye, had, after taking magical precautions against her supernatural powers, seized her and burnt her alive, then scattering her ashes over the fields to secure themselves against her posthumous vengeance. This is what the Iclander Gretti did to the "afterganger" Glam, about A.D. 1000.

There were many of these survivals in the Victorian age. I was once the witness of a very curious funeral in the West of Ireland. The first part was carried out with full Catholic rites, but the coffin was not lowered into the grave. When this part was over, the priest departed, with a look on his face which spoke more plainly than words, "I know quite well what is about to happen, but I am not going to know." Then began a ceremony which might have been seen ten thousand years since; heathen through and through, and obviously far more important to the relatives than the Christian forms. After the dancing and keening, which were savage enough, were over, it was necessary that the dead man should be provided, in the next world, with what he had found indispensable in this, exactly as, in old days, a deceased warrior was set in his howe with his sword and his horse. It was plain that this man had been an inveterate smoker, and could not be pictured as contriving to endure existence, however shadowy, in Hades without his constant solace. His clay pipe, and a packet of tobacco, were therefore ceremoniously placed on his

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coffin. As I looked on, and thought of the strange mingling of religions, I remembered the Venerable Bede's story of King Raedwald of East Anglia, who built a church with a sacramental table at one end and an altar to Thor at the other. He was going to be on the safe side in either case. I recalled also the old Roman belief, immortalised by Virgil, that the dead retain the habits they cherished when living:

*Quae gratia currum  
Armorumque fuit vivis, quae cura nitentes  
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos.<sup>1</sup>*

I have heard of, but never saw, that remarkable survival the "sin-eater." This man, whose wickedness has set him beyond all hope of salvation, concentrates the sins of others into food, places it on their breasts when they are dying, and then eats the fateful mess, thus securing heaven for them, while, as he thinks, he cannot increase the pains of hell for himself—he is already doomed to the lowest deep. He is, of course, nothing but the ancient scapegoat, who in Israel carried the guilt of the nation to Azazel the desert-demon, and who appears in practically all religions. He was certainly alive in Victoria's reign; but let not the present generation boast over its fathers. Only the other day I heard it said that he still exists, and still makes a fair living out of the superstitious terrors of the moribund and their relatives.

<sup>1</sup> The love of horses which they had, alive,  
And care of chariots, after death, survive.

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“Skin-changers,” wer-wolves, vampires, and the rest, are of course the motif of multitudes of mediæval stories; indeed, if Mr. Montague Summers is to be trusted, we ought to believe in them still. They were, at any rate, still believed in by some early Victorians. In the sixties (as I was told by one who knew the actors), a Durham man, going to his work, was plagued by the attentions of a pig. At last, in desperation, he turned and hit it with all his might on the nose; and, wonderful to tell, the animal ceased to pester him. When he returned from work in the evening, he was told that old Gammer Watson was in bed with a broken nose. “Ah kenned it were ’er,” said he; for the old lady was known to have the power of turning herself into any animal she chose. A similar story, with more fatal results, was told much later; the poor woman in this case was actually killed by her neighbours.

In speaking of events which might be treated as miraculous—“dispensations,” “special Providences”—I mentioned the story of the Barn murder and the dream through which it was said to have been discovered. I may now tell another story closely connected with that murder. Corder, the villain of the piece, was hanged at Bury St. Edmunds in 1828. Even before his execution the famous play was performed. On the fatal day, a gentleman of Bury, sick of the excitement, left the town for a holiday, and went to another. In the evening he thought he would go to a theatre, and found that *Macbeth* was being acted. All went well

until, to the gentleman's disgust, the question was flung out from the stage,

"Is execution done on Cawdor?"

Could he not escape the nuisance even here? "It is," he cried, "and I'm tired of hearing about it": and straightway left the theatre.

In 1855 my father, then a very young man, happened to be in Bury St. Edmunds. He came with an introduction to the great scholar John William Donaldson, then Head Master of Bury School, whose Latin and Greek Grammars long held the field, and whose discovery of the "tertiary predicate" is still remembered. Dr. Donaldson asked him to call on him one evening after school-hours. He set out accordingly. On the way he was startled by seeing a man with a club-foot and a curiously haunted expression.

He reached the school, and was most hospitably received by the Doctor. The conversation, as was inevitable, turned on Greek, for my father was beginning the study, and Donaldson was doubtless delighted to find one who, unlike most of his pupils, drank in eagerly everything he had to say. The hours passed almost unnoticed, until midnight was not far off, and my father, preparing to go, recalled the queer figure he had met in the street.

"Oh, that!" said the Doctor. "That's young Corder, the son of the Barn murderer. Everybody knows him, because of his deformity. He's had a sad life. He tries to work, and people crowd to the shop to see him, and point out the son of a murderer. He

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has been as far as Colchester, but the same thing happens. Either his master thinks he brings custom, and encourages the sight-seers, which the lad can't endure, and leaves of his own accord, or the master hates them and wishes him to go. He's back home now, where people are too well used to him to trouble much about him; but how long he'll stay I can't tell.

"By the way," went on the Doctor, "you know, I suppose, that at twelve on a moonlight night, Corder (the father, I mean) always gets down and walks?"

"That's a pleasant thing to hear," said my father, "when I have to go right past the place."

Dr. Donaldson smiled. My father never knew whether he really believed the story, or whether he was mischievously trying to frighten his guest. "Oh, it's all right: he won't trouble *you*. Give him a few words of Latin if he comes."

My father left, a little disturbed in mind. It was midnight, the ghostly hour, and full moon, the opportunity of witchcraft and diabolism. He walked fast, in a sort of hope that thus he might outpace the evil influences. Ere long he reached the ill-omened spot—the neighbourhood of the jail. In a mingled access of fear and curiosity he slowed down his rate of walking, and listened: he wished at once to verify the story and to confute it. There was no doubt—Corder *was* walking; for there were unquestionably footsteps behind him, slow and measured. He increased his speed—they too quickened.

The man in the "Ancient Mariner" does not turn his head; but my father *did* turn, and this intensified his terrors, for he could see nothing; and in that sick daylight he would have seen anything earthly. He *ought* to have seen something to correspond with what he heard; he could command many yards in all directions, and not a soul was visible, though a spirit was only too audible. He felt the sweat on his forehead and the beating of his heart. No Latin occurred to his mind, but he did recall the words of the old philosopher, "Spirit, I am Faust, thine equal"; yet these did not diminish his horror.

What kept him from running he never knew, but perhaps it was pride. He was not going to flee from a terror he could not see. Telling the story years later, he was fain to say, "I should run away *now*." But it may have been the courage which, as De Quincey says, comes from the extremity of killing fear. At any rate, when he came to the end of the Crescent, he did not go on; he bent round to the left, along the wall of the jail, and so back to the Crescent again. Along the wall, the steps were louder. A second time he made the circuit, walking now slowly, now quickly; and the ghostly steps mimicked his. A thought struck him. He would go round again and test it; and he would test it with his voice. He spoke aloud, and the words returned to him. A fourth time, and the idea was confirmed. That Crescent and that wall made a whispering gallery; what he had heard was the

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repetition of his own steps, carried round and echoing on the pavement.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, after twenty-seven years, the perturbed spirit of Corder was laid to rest. On a dark night, of course, there was always the *possibility* of an unseen human being; on a bright night, if you could not see him, he was not there; and by daytime there were always enough people about to confuse the sounds—quite apart from the absence of fear which day brings. Some people, I have heard, regretted that the ghost was laid, for the terror had held its romance: and many, even when they knew the cause, still, when walking that way at midnight, hugged their dread, and half believed that the old tale was true.

When my father told the story to Dr. Donaldson, he smiled and said, as befitted a scholar to whom Greece and Rome were more real than the present, "I wish we could test the old classical stories of Petronius and Apollonius in the same way. But, after all, a ghost-story is more effective when unexplained." And then, quite calmly, he returned to the tertiary predicate and Greek derivations.

But here is a story of a ghost which, so far as I know, was never laid; the explanation, at any rate, was never given, and must be left to conjecture. A minister whom I knew, who was not only a Doctor of Divinity but a Fellow of the Royal Society and one of the leading biologists of his time, used to

<sup>1</sup> I told this story in the *New Statesman*. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Quine, an Isle of Man clergyman, wrote to the paper saying he had had a similar experience in Beaumont Street, Oxford.



lecture up and down the country on his special subject to large and enthusiastic audiences. He thus made acquaintance with people of all ranks and with houses of every kind. On one occasion he was invited to stay in an old and large mansion, where lived a widow-lady with her daughter: a house, in fact, the size of which was totally out of proportion to the numbers of the family. Apparently it was Elizabethan, but it had been considerably enlarged in later generations. The room assigned to him was in the middle of a wing which had thus been added: a long passage, reminding the Doctor vaguely of Hampton Court, ran in front of this room and five or six others; and the windows of this passage looked out on a park. The room was large and perfectly cheerful; and the Doctor, a little tired after his lecture, prepared himself for a pleasant night, in his usual manner. A table was by the side of his bed, and two candles were on it. These he lit, and began to read himself to sleepiness. Nor did the recipe fail; in a quarter of an hour he turned over, blew out the candles, and fell comfortably asleep.

How long he lay thus he never knew, but he was suddenly wakened by the distinct and overwhelming impression that there was a presence in the room. He sat up, but could neither see nor hear anything; yet there was the certainty that the presence was moving round and round the room, now at the foot of the bed, now on the right, now on the left. He sat there, not daring to stir—the dreadful silence broken only by the beating of his heart. It may have been

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minutes, or it may have been hours. One thing was beyond question; it was forced upon him—this thing was evil and it was malignant: it meant him harm. “I do not know how I did it,” said he in telling the tale, “but I knew I must flee: and somehow, perhaps by Divine aid, I was given the courage to run away. I felt It to be on the side opposite the door; in one movement I was out of bed, through the door, and in the passage. I seemed to feel the unuttered rage of the Being as I closed the door and moved up the passage to the farther end.”

Fortunately it was summer, and he suffered little from the chill, though he noticed that his night-shirt was wet through with perspiration. Gradually the light of dawn made its way through the passage windows; the voice of the birds little by little restored his courage, and the sight of the park seemed to tell him that he was still in the land of the living. At six the church clock sounded; he returned, still trembling, to the room, dressed, and lay down on the bed with the door wide open.

At breakfast the lady asked him how he had slept.

“Well, madam,” he replied, “I cannot say I had a good night.”

The lady looked strange. And then the daughter suddenly broke in—“Oh, mother, I told you not to put Dr. — into that room!”

“Hush!” said the lady. Nothing more was said on the subject: the Doctor was left to fancy that

perhaps, like Lord Woodville in Scott's *Tapestried Chamber*, his hostess, half believing and half disbelieving in the uncanniness of the room, had thought she would put the question to the proof at the expense of her guest. She may have hoped that the evil would have no power over a Doctor of Divinity. It took all his charity to forgive her.

Another minister, on a like occasion, was fairly warned that, if he wanted a bed at all, it must be in a haunted room. Having no belief in ghosts but a firm trust in Divine protection, he consented, remembering the comfortable night Sir Walter Scott had spent within three feet of a corpse. He said his prayers quite calmly and fell easily asleep. After a time, however, he woke up—a most unpleasant sound was coming from the very cupboard in which the ghost had been said to lodge. His certainty as to the non-existence of ghosts gave way rapidly to slight scepticism, and then to a hideous feeling that perhaps the believers were right after all.

He strained his eyes, but could see nothing, and stayed, sitting up in bed, till dawn. With the first rays of the kindly sun, he got out of bed and, with some trepidation, opened the door of the cupboard, which he found very tight wedged. Instantly into the room came a swarm of mosquitoes, which, with some difficulty, he chased through the open window. He was left to reflect how deceptive sounds are when heard in the silence of the night-time, and also to rejoice that his theories of the spirit-world had, as

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far as that room was concerned, received no refutation.

An incident recorded by Thomas Cooper in his Autobiography—which I had heard my father tell as he had heard it from Cooper's own lips—may be worth repeating here. After the storms and stresses of Cooper's earlier years, his imprisonments and buffetings to and fro, he had ceased to find consolation in materialism, and returned to the Christianity of his earlier days, except that, instead of being a Methodist, he adopted Baptist views. He was now employed, as we shall see again later, in lecturing in favour of Christianity among his old associates. This task involved a good deal of travelling. On one occasion he was engaged to lecture in the North along with a minister with whom he was intimate. They came to the station together, and were about to enter a front carriage, when the guard, who knew them both, came up and said, "I would not get into that carriage if I were you."

"Why not?" said the Doctor; "a front carriage shakes less than a rear one, and we both prefer it."

"I don't know why, sir; but it has been borne in on me that you had better not."

"What shall we do, Thomas?" said the Doctor.

"Can't do any harm," answered Cooper; and, to humour the guard, they took the rearmost carriage.

The train started. A few miles further on a cow suddenly got on to the line, and, in accordance with George Stephenson's prophecy as to what would happen in such an emergency, "it wer bad for t'

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coo ”; but it was also bad for the train, the front part of which was overturned. The passengers in those carriages were all hurt, and one or two were killed. Cooper did not venture to explain the guard’s premonition; but it was clear he took the incident as a case of a special Providence.<sup>1</sup>

One is, indeed, embarrassed by riches in recalling such stories. During the Great War, I met a man who showed me a Bible which, carried in his breast-pocket, had saved his life. A bullet had been deflected by it; and, curiously enough, certain letters, on every page from the first to the last, had been nearly doubled in size by the force of the blow, which had struck at an angle of about thirty degrees. As I looked at the book, I remembered how, in the War of the Austrian Succession, one of Wesley’s preachers had been forcibly enlisted, and served in Flanders against Marshal Saxe. His life was saved by a Bible in precisely the same fashion.

There were also, besides these uninvited supernatural visitations, some which were, at any rate in certain households, deliberately sought for, though furtively and with fear and trembling. Every now and then there is a recrudescence of the mania for planchette-playing, table-turning, or other such uncanny amusements; and my youth coincided with one of these times. Parents, of course,

<sup>1</sup> What Cooper would have said if he had been told that an almost exactly similar “ Providence ” saved the heathen poet Simonides, “ well may we guess, but cannot tell.”

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were discreetly kept in ignorance; for it was shrewdly suspected that they might regard the investigations as touching upon the diabolical; and certainly some of the occurrences I recall were terrifying enough. On one occasion, I remember, the table informed us that it was the spirit of a man whom we had all known in life as a sinner of deep dye, and who, as he told us, was now expiating his wickedness in Tartarus. No cross-examination, no clever manipulation of questions, could catch him out, though the séance lasted two hours and sent us all horror-struck to bed. Next night, with uneasy consciences, we tried him again. The result was less awe-inspiring but equally startling; for he assured us that he had been lying the whole time, and that we had been fools to be taken in.

With planchette we had experiences as remarkable, if not more so. Among our friends was a boy of fifteen, in whose face, as in that of Macbeth, men might read strange matters. His eyes, which were what novelists might call "compelling," were a peculiar shade of green; and it was popularly believed that he could see in the dark. At any rate, in the dark we could see *them*, glowing like small lamps. He used to tell us that he dreamed green dreams. He certainly had astonishing hypnotic powers, and his control over planchette was something the like of which I have never seen since. One incident, among many I could mention, I may relate and leave others to explain. Another boy took a Bible into a dark room, and put his

finger at random into it, while Brown (so I may call the green-eyed youth) manipulated planchette in another room. The instrument was then requested to write the text on which the other lad had placed his finger. It wrote, "There shall be no night there"; and the other boy was called in: he opened the Bible, and the text was disclosed: it was Revelation xxi. 25, which the reader may look up for himself. This story I can unreservedly guarantee.<sup>1</sup>

Another statement of planchette I have tried in vain to verify. It struck someone to ask who was its inventor. Without hesitation it answered, "Roderick Murchison in 1835." Everybody present denied that he had the slightest thought of Murchison; and some maintained that the date was impossible. This, however, as a glance at the geologist's Life showed, was a mistake: Murchison was forty-three in 1835, and might easily have done something great in that year; but beyond that I have been able to find no confirmation.

<sup>1</sup> This may happen without planchette's aid. Several University girls tried hymn-book *sortes* to learn the results of an examination. One of them was named Jordan; and her *sortes* came out, "Jordan passed." The prophecy proved correct.

### CHAPTER III

## SOME STRANGE ACQUAINTANCES

MY FATHER, a minister of religion, had a wide and varied list of acquaintances. He knew Cardinal Manning and Dale of Birmingham; the prize-fighter Bendigo and John Bright the Quaker; Thomas Cooper the Chartist and the dubious financier, Jabez Balfour. As chaplain of Parkhurst Prison he frequently met this last remarkable character, who, after astonishing the country with his sudden rise, was experiencing the vagaries of fortune and serving the last years of his sentence. He had not lost his charm of manner, and was, in fact, the most pleasant conversationalist my father had come across since the days of his youth. Balfour always maintained that the jury which convicted him had made a mistake. "If," said he, "I had been left free—under no matter how strict a supervision—I would, in two or three years, have put things straight, and none of my clients would have lost a penny. No one else knew, as I did, all the ramifications of my affairs. To arrest and imprison me was to ruin the only chance of straightening things out. As soon as I am at liberty, I shall publish a book showing in detail how this would have been done."<sup>1</sup> My father was inclined to believe him,

<sup>1</sup> Judge Parry, in his *Drama of the Law*, speaks with just admiration of this book, which Balfour published after his release.



but, what was more noteworthy, the Governor of the prison, who was accustomed to the plausibilities of criminals, and was not a man to be easily deluded, was convinced that Balfour was telling the truth.

When I was very young, I used to read regularly a magazine entitled *The Family Friend*. In this, week after week, appeared a series of moral and religious tales, one or two of which illustrated the advantages of honesty in business. It was not till long afterwards that I discovered their authorship. They were written by a lady who, left a widow with several children, maintained herself by writing these and other stories. One of her sons was Jabez Balfour. I have often wondered whether his subsequent career was a reaction against the too pious influences of his home, or whether, on the other hand, he really tried to put his mother's principles into practice and was merely the victim of unkind fortune.

I have already mentioned Henry Wainwright, whose crime was discovered in so extraordinary a manner. My father knew Wainwright, though slightly: for this strange man lived for some time next door to a gentleman who was a friend of our family. Wainwright had been a preacher, and a remarkably eloquent one: but at the same time as he was enjoying these oratorical triumphs he was carrying on a series of very vulgar intrigues; he was, in fact, living a multiple life. It was one of these relations that finally ruined him; for he found it impossible to rid himself of his entanglement

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except by murder. Exposure would have been fatal to the reputation which he valued so highly. At his trial, a clergyman, who had known him on the more open side of his life, bore witness, clearly heartfelt, to the sanctity of his character. When, after the nine days of the trial, the jury had given their verdict, the usual solemn question was asked: and here Wainwright's declamatory gifts had an opportunity of displaying themselves on a new stage. He drew himself up as he had done in the pulpit, and astonished everybody with the eloquence of his protestations of innocence.

During his last days, it is said, he dwelt with special satisfaction on his "successes" with women; but also, occasionally, on his Ciceronian powers: while, like almost all murderers, he dilated eloquently on the malignity of the chance which had brought about his detection.

The difference in psychological acumen between the Victorian age and the present is very strongly shown by the public attitude towards Wainwright and others of his class. There was then no attempt to solve the problem of his contradictory mind, or rather, it was so simple as to solve itself. He was utterly bad; his religion was hypocrisy, and there an end. To-day there would have been a recognition that even a murderer may have his sincerities, and that so strange a complexity could not be unravelled without time and study. That the prosecution, in unearthing the motive for the crime, was also, in a fashion, revealing the excuse, did not

then occur to more than a silent few. I shall later refer to the great American preacher Horace Bushnell. In one of his sermons, Bushnell alluded to the famous murder of Dr. Parkman by the Harvard Professor Webster, and spoke of the satisfaction which Webster's punishment had given to the American people: noble man though he was, he did not endeavour to understand the criminal's mind.

Some years later, when the trial of Dr. Lamson<sup>1</sup> came on—I knew people who had been intimate with this clumsy poisoner—there were, I think, signs of more than merely morbid interest in the case: and one could see the germs of a science of criminology in the discussions which one heard. Men discussed him as a human being. Not long afterwards, Lombroso, with all his fancifulness, at least made the criminal the subject of analysis.

But to return. I now go back twenty or thirty years.

Of all my father's chance meetings the most remarkable was his encounter with William Palmer of Rugeley, the most famous murderer since Eugene Aram, and one of those men whose character, like Aram's and Wainwright's, will always interest the psychologist. My father happened, in 1855, to be in a railway-carriage in which were half a dozen

<sup>1</sup> The counsel for Lamson was Montagu Williams, the Marshall Hall of the time. In his *Leaves of a Life* Williams tells a story which casts a strange light on the mentality of barristers and women. During the trial, Lamson's wife, who stuck to him with the most touching trust and affection through it all, had been visibly encouraging him. Having no real arguments, Williams used these incidents, with great pathos, in his appeal to the jury: yet, as he confesses, was aware all the time that Mrs. Lamson knew, not only that her husband had murdered the brother whose death was the subject of the trial, but that he had previously murdered her other brother also.

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men bound for a race-course. Possibly they, like Dogberry, had recently had losses, for they seemed somewhat morose and downcast. Suddenly, when the train stopped at a station, there entered a man whose mere appearance changed gloom to cheerfulness. His face radiated benevolence, and his conversation tallied with it. The slumberous put on vivacity, and the sullen became jocose.

The talk, inevitably, was chiefly on racing. My father listened, but for a long time said nothing. After perhaps twenty minutes, the newcomer, who sat next him, turned to him, and smilingly said, "You, sir, are a clergyman, and I should say you don't approve of racing."

"Certainly not, and still less of the betting that goes with it."

"Why, what is wrong with it? Half the best men in the country go in for it. I have met and betted with some of the highest noblemen in the land, Lord Hartington, Lord George"—he paused for a moment—"and dozens of others."

(Incidentally, the pause on Lord George was perhaps significant; we shall learn why before long.)

My father, who was young and enthusiastic, then gave a few of the arguments against betting. The gentleman listened courteously. "You would not bet, I think, unless you thought you knew something which the other man did not know."

"True enough, but that's the case with all businesses."

"But often your knowledge fails you. Your

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horse may not do himself justice, another may be better, though you thought not, or he may be what you call 'pulled.' You lose, perhaps more than you can afford, and then there may be a temptation to crime."

The man started; a queer look passed over his face, and he muttered, half to himself, "Cost me a lot—I'll give it up."

The talk took another turn, but it was always pleasant. After two or three hours, the train reached its destination. The man rose, shook hands in the friendliest fashion, and went his way.

Shortly afterwards, the whole country rang with the story of the Rugeley murder. A doctor named Palmer was suspected of murdering a young man named Cook, one of his "friends," to whom he owed a betting-debt. The portrait of the suspected man was published, and my father saw it. There could be no doubt about it; it was the portrait of the benevolent gentleman he had met in the train. Things took their course; Palmer was tried, and there was every indication that he had murdered, not only Cook, but his brother, his wife, and at least half a dozen others. Nay, it is said that the Portland family had reason to believe that he had murdered Lord George Bentinck; for they recalled that Lord George's symptoms, when he suddenly died, were exactly similar to those of Cook; his betting-book was missing, and Palmer had lost heavily to him.

Palmer's benevolence, so long as you did not stand in his way, was unquestionable, though, if you did,

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he gave you a dose of strychnine without remorse. His handwriting, which I have seen, was feminine in character, and would, I am sure, have led an expert in caligraphy to ascribe it to a philanthropist. Just after his wife's death, he took the sacrament, and recorded his grief in terms which do not sound hypocritical. He was, I believe, genuinely sorry that she had had to die. A juryman, the uncle of a friend of mine, said that he was struck at the trial by the kindness of his features.<sup>1</sup>

But here is a story, yet more convincing, which was told me, fifty years after the trial, by an old colonel. In 1867 the colonel happened to be at Rugeley, and put up at an inn. No sooner was he in his room than he noticed that the linen was marked "Palmer." "What!" he said to the landlord, "had you anything to do with the murderer Palmer?"

"Yes, sir," said the man; "only don't call him the murderer but the murdered. If ever there was a kind master it was the doctor. Just before he was taken away he said to me, 'John, I may never come back. If I don't, I want you to take my furniture—whatever you choose—and the linen, and anything else. Set up an inn with it, and God bless you.' No, sir, he was the best of men."

<sup>1</sup> This juryman saw the little pellet of paper which, when the verdict was given, Palmer threw to his solicitor. "The riding has done it," was written on the paper: that is, in Palmer's sporting language, the horse was none too good, but the skill of the jockey had brought him through. The Crown case was none too strong, but Cockburn, the Attorney-General, had made it succeed. Cockburn said that this was the greatest compliment his forensic ability ever received.

Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, in his later years, became, as I have said, a lecturer on behalf of Christianity, and had considerable success among his old friends. Some of these lectures were published under the title *God, the Soul, and a Future State*. In one of them he tells a story of Palmer which I have heard some people call impossible. Cooper was the most truthful of men, and I tell the tale as he told it. He was lecturing on Conscience, and declared that conscience cannot be killed. "But, you will say (I quote from my memory of a book I have not seen since childhood) did not Palmer, who murdered Cook, and was suspected of murdering his wife and his brother—did not *he* kill conscience? Let me tell you a story told me by the chaplain of the jail where he was confined. On the last night, the chaplain visited him and urged him to confess—in vain. He turned away, and reached the door. But he felt he must make a last effort. He returned, and pleaded hard, and at last Palmer said, 'If I were to confess about Cook, I should have to confess about my brother too.'

"Here the chaplain, astonished out of his self-command, said, 'Why? Did you really murder your brother?' and Palmer, recollecting, shut himself up at once. He spoke not another word, but, putting his head between his hands, uttered a groan that shook the cell.

"That groan," said Cooper, in what must have been a most impressive burst of eloquence, "that groan was the voice of conscience."

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Be that as it may, the next morning, at the very last minute, when the sheriff asked Palmer if he had anything to say, he replied with perfect calmness, "No, sir; I die a murdered man."

I often think that, in this strange mingling of good and bad, Palmer may stand as a type of the age in which he lived; in fact of any age. In a famous passage of the *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, which was written within a few months of Palmer's trial, Froude says, "To be entirely just in our estimate of other ages is not difficult—it is impossible": and then he goes on to say, "We can conceive a description of the year which has just closed over us, true in all its details, which, if given without the correcting traits, shall make ages to come marvel why the Cities of the Plain were destroyed and England was allowed to survive. The frauds of trusted men; *the wholesale poisonings*; the robberies; the cruel usage of women; life and property insecure; let all this be ascertained hereafter by the investigation of a posterity which desires to judge us as we generally have judged our forefathers, and few years will show darker than this. Yet we know, in the honesty of our hearts, how unjust such a picture would be. If the future advocate marks the year with a white stroke, as one in which, on the whole, the moral harvest was better than an average, he will be right."

I could wish that everyone who contemplates the Victorian age would bear these wise words in mind.



## CHAPTER IV

# EVANGELICALISM

THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE are usually very gradual and subtle, and people hardly perceive more distinctly that their minds are altering than that their bodies are growing. Even the revolution which to Rip van Winkle, who had slept through it all, was so portentous, had come by imperceptible degrees to the actors in it. It is the same with the revolution which has taken place in the religious ideas of British people, whatever the school to which they belong: and even now they are often almost unconscious of the change. High Anglicans reverence the name of Pusey, but they would be shocked at the bareness of Pusey's services and at many of his antiquated ideas. Scottish ministers are still "Calvinists," but they wear their predestination with a difference. Evangelicals, again, are hardly what Simeon would have recognised as such.

But in all these cases the changes have been gradual; there has been no point at which one could say, "This is no longer what it was." It is true that in the country at large the death of Queen Victoria marked a distinct epoch. There was—may one venture to say it?—amid all the other feelings a sense of relief: a restraining influence had been

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removed, which was none the less oppressive because it was largely an affair of sentimental imagination. King Edward was a man of the world, and believed that humanity as a whole should have full play; that virtue like everything else should be moderate, and that in excess it might easily be harmful. That part of society which is influenced by royalty soon took the right tone. But even this change took time to make itself felt in religious circles. Only slowly, I think, did piety begin to perceive that it had to contend with a new form of indifference, a certain *vis inertiae* which it had not felt before.

When I was young, I heard many sermons in which the life of Prince Albert was held up as a model for us to follow. When Martin's biography appeared, there was a glorious opportunity for preachers to point to an example of religion in high places, and it was utilised to the full. The Queen, too, was known to have discovered the "secret of England's greatness," and the fact was not forgotten.<sup>1</sup> She had given the word, and great was the company of the preachers who repeated it.

If there were instances of irreligion in aristocratic circles, it was a consolation that they found no countenance in the highest of all. But I never heard the name of Edward VII used in this way. There was much respect for him as a King who did his

<sup>1</sup> The general sentiment is well illustrated by a story, once universally known, of two good ladies who attended a performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Contemplating the sad behaviour of the serpent of old Nile, one murmured to the other, "How different from the home life of our dear Queen."

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constitutional duty, but he did not easily fit in to the part of a Hezekiah or Josiah.

To look back across his reign to an earlier period is thus a little difficult. One's memories may be, to a certain extent, affected by a change so great. But I will make the attempt; asking my readers once again to bear in mind that these are *personal* recollections, and that others may find their own somewhat different.

The one certain mark of Victorian Evangelicalism, as I remember it, was the insistence on the necessity of conversion. Preferably, it was felt that this conversion should be assignable to a definite place and a precise day, hour, or even minute: there ought to be a distinct dividing line between before and after. "Of Zion it shall be said, This or that man was born there *and then*": and it was considered hardly satisfactory if one was unable to put a finger on these temporal and local points. Allowances and exceptions might indeed be made. Paul was converted instantaneously; but there is no record of the moment at which Timothy passed from darkness to light: and there might be Timothys in devout families. None the less, parents watched anxiously for a sign that their child had taken the great step; and there is no doubt that many children were seriously plagued by the feeling that they ought to take the step and could not. Fathers spoke of the sudden illumination they had themselves received, and often worried their offspring with questions as to whether they too had not seen the heavenly

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light. Not infrequently, I fear, the children, in sheer desperation, being thus put upon the rack, gave the desired answer, careless of the truth. Others, more sincere, fretted themselves into misery: I knew more than one who, finding it impossible to secure the blessing in their waking hours, prayed that they might get the process over in their sleep. Others again, unquestionably received it. I remember being much embarrassed by a Falstaffian schoolfellow of mine, who sat next me, and interrupted my work by continual leaps and wriggles. "I can't help it," he said when I remonstrated; "I'm converted, and feel so happy."<sup>1</sup>

Many of these conversions were astonishing, and their effects lasting. Reprobates were turned into decent and useful citizens. I knew a converted prize-fighter, whose bouts with Satan were as vigorous as those with his old opponents in the ring, and usually successful. His description of one of these contests was peculiarly racy, and was made more so by the Yorkshire dialect in which it was uttered:

"Ah was coomin' to t' meeting, when t' Divil met me. 'Bob,' says he, 'tha's got a cheek to be gāin' to

<sup>1</sup> The methods of conversion were sometimes drastic—at least in earlier times. In the eighteen-thirties a strong Methodist was unequally yoked with an unbelieving wife, whose insults and sneering at his piety were incessant. After enduring the torment for years, he finally said, "Well, you've nagged at my Methodism long enough; I'll give it up." He left the house, called on the minister, and surrendered his ticket of membership. Thus restored to heathenism, he was free from the obligation to turn the other cheek. On the way home, he cut a stout sapling, with which he administered to his wife so sound a thrashing that, seeing what his Methodism had saved her from, she begged him to rejoin the brethren. Next day he went back to the minister, and asked for two tickets, one for himself and one for his wife. I was assured that the treatment produced a permanent cure; the lady became a life-long and excellent church-member!

yon good folk, when tha's lived such a bad life.' Weel, ah was fair flabbergast when t' Divil said that, and ah thocht o' turnin' back: when, all of a sudden, it struck me what to say, and ah said, 'Weel Divil, if it cooms to livin' a bad life, tha's no great shakes thasén.' " Bob was indeed an excellent specimen of the converted Yorkshireman, straight, honest, and steadfast. I could tell of many like him; and I defy any who have seen such cases to doubt the efficacy of the process which had made such men. The "experiences" described at "love-feasts" cannot be explained away.

There were indeed relapses. What was undertaken during the excitement of a revival could not always be kept up in the rough and tumble of daily life. There were Galatians, or as a Yorkshire friend of mine called them, "Galathumpians," who, like Paul's converts of old, received the word gladly, but were soon bewitched, and fell away. This is but human nature, and is to be expected whenever something involving persistent effort is demanded. There are always many Pliables for one Christian. But I cannot see that this is any justification for the common attacks upon conversions and revivals. We are always hearing the remark, "It won't last"; and everybody knows it is true. But after all, a short-lived piety is better than none at all. Ask the wives of some of these "backsliders" whether they would wish their husbands had never reformed even by way of an interlude, and hear the answer. It is no light matter if the family of a drunkard can

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enjoy, even for six weeks only, a respite from his violence: and I have known case after case in which the respite has lasted for many months, and has been a happy oasis in a desert life. Mr. Evan Roberts's revival among the Welsh miners is still remembered as a blissful period, though it is true that the pit-ponies were bewildered when the oaths to which they had been accustomed ceased. It is ridiculous to say that, because so many of Mr. Roberts's converts reverted, his work was therefore entirely wasted.

I could say much, both favourable and unfavourable, about the revivals I have witnessed, some conducted by High Church clergymen,<sup>1</sup> others by Dissenting ministers or laymen. In many cases the scenes bordered on hysteria. In one service a man who had been lame for years suddenly cried out, "I am cured," and hurled away his crutch, which narrowly missed the pastor. In other cases, everything was externally calm, but there was deep feeling below the surface. I shall, however, say no

<sup>1</sup> E.g. by Father Ignatius, whose revivals were outwardly indistinguishable from those of Primitive Methodists. One of the most amusing incidents I ever witnessed occurred at a revival conducted by Father Ignatius, which was thronged with people of all denominations and of none. Among these was the widow of a well-known Nonconformist minister, a stately dame, who might, as far as appearance went, have been a duchess of the *ancien régime*. At the appointed time, one of the deaconesses approached her, and asked her if she was saved. I never saw such scorn on any other human face as that with which she greeted the questioner. Words failed her; it was her son who spoke. "My mother's far more used to asking that question than to answering it."

Some years later, I attended a revival service conducted by V. S. S. Coles, the famous Vice-Principal of Pusey House, who was said by some to play the Father Joseph to Gore's Richelieu. Apart from the fact that it was in a church, it might have been a Salvation Army service, with General Booth in the pulpit.

more on this subject. I turn to consider the doctrines which we were taught, and upon which the services, revivalist or other, were based.

There was everywhere a keen eye for "unsoundness": and few, in those days, as it is to be feared many did later, were inclined to seek notoriety by airing strange theories.

I mentioned, in a previous chapter, Dr. Donaldson. The name arouses memories and reflections; for Donaldson, in his own day, was a heretic. His *Book of Jashar*, it is true, was the mildest of unorthodox publications, but it was too much for the Fundamentalists of the time, and was considered as not at all the sort of thing to be written by a clergyman and a schoolmaster. It brought its author almost as much obloquy as, a little later, Colenso had to suffer for his arithmetical strictures on the Pentateuch. Not to believe in the Mosaic origin of that work, or even in its exclusively Mosaic authorship, was to put yourself beyond the pale. The literalism of those times was indeed extraordinary, and was common to all schools of British religious thought.<sup>1</sup> When Dean Milman ventured to assert that Abraham was "a great sheikh," and to liken the early Hebrews to Bedouins, a thrill of horror

<sup>1</sup> When very young I was confronted with this problem. Only one passage in the whole Pentateuch, however, gave me real difficulty. This was the one in which it is said that "no one knows of Moses's sepulchre unto this day." This, it seemed to me, must be a later interpolation; for Moses himself, I argued, cannot have helped knowing where he was buried. I am not sure, nevertheless, whether even this exception would have pleased the orthodox.

Later, when I read Frank Newman's *Phases of Faith*, I found that similar difficulties had presented themselves to one of the acutest minds of the century.

ran through Puseyite, Evangelical, and Broad Church circles.

Anyone who reads to-day Newman's *Essay on Miracles*—even apart from the additions Newman made in his Catholic days—will be astonished at the naïveté of the argument. The stories of Eve and the serpent, of Balaam's ass, of Jonah's whale, are all literally true. There is not the slightest tinge of the critical spirit, nor any idea of the progressive nature of revelation—which is the very basis of modern Christianity. One sentence, and perhaps one only, will carry the consent of readers in our time: "It must be recollected that what is evidence in one age is often not so in another."<sup>1</sup>

Newman, as his subsequent career showed, was naturally inclined to welcome marvels; but his views on miracles would have found acceptance in a very different theological school. An enormously popular book, almost contemporary with the Oxford *Tracts*, was the *Daily Bible Illustrations* of John Kitto, who, as his preface states, deliberately avoided referring to the cavils of sceptics, "which few of his readers were likely to have heard of, and none of them to entertain." The result is amazing. There are dissertations accounting for the long lives

<sup>1</sup> I am not concerned here with Newman's later views. After his conversion, for example, he believed in the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, and defended the story of the flight of the Holy House from Palestine to Loreto by saying that God, who had saved all the species of animals from the Flood by means of the Ark, could easily provide a house with the power of flight. The point is that in the forties, Protestants, believing as they did in the story of Noah, would have had some difficulty in refuting the argument. To-day they are not troubled by it for an instant. They reject both tales alike.



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of Methuselah and Adam. The Tower of Babel was a literal edifice. The beauty of Sarah at ninety years of age, which attracted the admiration of Pharaoh, is explained by the fact that she was childless, and had thus escaped the deleterious influences which motherhood exerts on most women. *One* miracle Kitto allows himself to expunge. Elijah was fed by ravens. No, said Kitto, by Arabs, for, in Hebrew, the words for "raven" and "Arab" are exactly the same in their consonants, and the vowels were not written in the original copies of the Bible. As, however, "wolves" is in the same case, we were permitted to guess that the miracle was still more wonderful. That the Israelites when they left Egypt were six hundred thousand men, besides two million women and children, and yet contrived to encamp in a small oasis, gives Kitto no pause, any more than he boggled at the ages of the Patriarchs or the universality of the Flood.

Incidentally, nothing could better illustrate the extreme Sabbatarianism of the early Victorian age, on which I shall say a few words later, than the fact that Kitto's papers, which were meant to be read aloud every morning and evening—they were "specially adapted for the family circle"—and which were pietistic throughout, became, on the Sundays, even more devotional in tone than on the week-days. This might be thought impossible; but Kitto manages the feat with success. Why, after reading these, the family should have wished to listen to two more sermons on the same day, is one

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of those Victorian characteristics which this generation finds it specially hard to understand. The book was dedicated and presented to the Queen, who doubtless received it with gratitude as throwing the latest light on "the secret of England's greatness."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the views, confidently preached as beyond question, now seem remarkable. One of these, which was held by all sections of the Church, and which can be seen powerfully argued in many old treatises, had to do with the "Typology of Scripture." There was hardly any Biblical event that was not a type. In particular, the adventures of the Israelites in the desert were typical of the Christian's wanderings in his spiritual journeys. I heard scores of sermons in which these theories were eloquently discussed; but, young as I was, I found them difficult to digest. I remember shocking an old divine by telling him I thought it hard on the Hebrews that they should have to go through such horrors in order to provide a type for my temptations: that, for instance, they should have to fight tough battles with Amalek, or almost die of thirst, because people thousands of years after them were going to fight mental battles with Satan, or to thirst after righteousness. He replied, but without convincing me, that they had their typical compensations: they would not, it appeared, have had the manna, if it had not been necessary that their experiences should occasionally typify the outpourings of divine grace upon the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Anyone who wants to see the vast advance made in the latter half of the century, need only compare Kitto's *Cyclopedia* with Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, which represents the most cautious modern views.

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These, and many other similar doctrines, were accepted by the rank and file with perfect simplicity. The theologians might point to the commentaries of St. Paul on the story of Hagar, or even refer eruditely to Clement and Origen: their hearers took them without question and without reasoning why, in the spirit of the soldiers of Balaclava. The nearest approach to doubt I recall is well exemplified by a remark I heard from a sound Church-member when the talk turned on recent Egyptian and Babylonian discoveries: "Oh, I *do* hope nothing will turn up to prove that the Bible isn't true"—the unravelment of which I leave to expert psychologists. All through my early youth—there was a marked change later—such ideas as these, presented by Pusey<sup>1</sup> to Anglicans or by Kitto to Evangelicals, were what the oracles of Delphi were to Cræsus. Those with whom I was brought into closest contact did not—for they were strong Protestants—maintain, with Pius IX, that the Israelites, in attacking the Seven Nations, were impelled by a rapturous belief in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: but the principle was the same. The whole Bible was equally inspired, Leviticus or Esther as much as the Gospel of John, and the list of Patriarchs as certainly true as the list of the Apostles. We were encouraged to read the Bible through—the genealogies of Chronicles and all—from Genesis to Revelation, and then begin

<sup>1</sup> Pusey's *Lectures on Daniel* was in our library, with its "proofs" that the book dated from Belshazzar's time. It was some years before Driver delivered me from Pusey's yoke.

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again. Contradictions simply did not exist: both David and Elhanan somehow contrived to kill Goliath, and the second chapter of Genesis said exactly the same thing as the first. What was more important, moral flaws were ignored also. No doubts assailed us as to the justice of the deposition of Saul, or as to the punishment of Uzzah for so natural an act as touching the Ark when it was falling. Even the marginal notes were sacrosanct: the world was created in 4004 B.C., and Solomon's Song was an allegory of Christ and the Church. It is hard to exaggerate the perniciousness of all this. Much time, and much pain, were required before one could rid oneself of this fatal Bibliolatry. My own rescue, fortunately, began fairly early, when I accidentally got hold of a book which showed how the Septuagint chronology differed from the Hebrew, and which stoutly maintained that the Septuagint was right. This destroyed for me the infallibility of Archbishop Ussher: but it was a long and weary time before I finally rid myself of slavery to the letter. Many others had the same path to tread. From all this the later generations have been free—through the exertions of their parents. It is to the later Victorians that the Georgians owe a childhood largely exempt from these mental struggles. They ought to be grateful. Other men have laboured and they have entered into their labours.

Even before the reign of Victoria began, Lyell had published his *Principles of Geology*, which demolished the Mosaic dates; but this book had but little

influence outside of a limited circle. A ripple of excitement was stirred a few years later by Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of Creation*, and some people were more or less anxious as to the orthodoxy of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, devout in tone though it was. Robertson of Brighton, to the horror of the *Record*, boldly pronounced the story of Jacob's wrestling to be "obviously mythical"; and Robertson died before Kitto. But these were only gentle disturbances, and few people anticipated the hurricanes which were so soon to come. The more highly educated were beginning timidly to ask questions; but the doubts were on side-issues. How far was Joshua justified in slaughtering the whole population of Ai and Jericho? Was Naaman healed by a miracle or by a mud-bath? Where lay the exact sin of David in numbering the people? Were the days of creation twenty-four hours or long periods?

There were indeed many "infidels" such as Carlile and, later, Foote, who were looked upon with horror, and whose punishments for "blasphemy" were regarded with approval. There were also many in a different class from Carlile. But Palmerston and his like, in the famous words of Rogers the poet, being "sensible men, kept their views to themselves." Macaulay, with his usual emphatic hyperbole, once told Henry Wilberforce that there were not two hundred men in London who believed in the Bible. He was certainly not one of the two hundred himself. With the exception of a few bold

spirits like James and John Mill or Harriet Martineau, these unbelievers held that, as religion was necessary to keep the lower classes in order, the pretence must be maintained that all the better people were devout Christians. "Materialism," which was the doctrine favoured by most of the Chartists, was clearly subversive—for the poor—and was frowned upon by legislators who were themselves materialists.

It seems to me in retrospect that one of the most justly censurable features of the early Victorian age was this reticence, which is one of the few characteristics of the time really deserving to be called hypocrisy. For the sake of political expediency—the "commodity" which disgusted Faulconbridge—scores of leading men disguised their real opinions and pretended to an orthodoxy to which they could lay no real claim. "The world would be astonished," said John Mill, "if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments are complete sceptics in religion, many of them refraining from avowal." Perhaps the most nauseous papers in all English "literature" are those in which such a man as Theodore Hook, Editor of *John Bull*, professes a Christian horror of Judaism and poses as a defender of the sanctity of the Sabbath. Hook confined himself to words; but the judges advanced to deeds, condemning to long terms of imprisonment poor and ignorant men who uttered, in vulgar language, what they themselves expressed in more elegant phrases. This savagery, based on the principle that

"Christianity was part of the common law of the realm," reached its height in the fifties and sixties; but it broke out sporadically during the following thirty or forty years. The condemnation of Bradlaugh in the early eighties for publishing views now openly advocated everywhere was due to his fearless and candid "secularism." The House of Commons never appeared in a worse light than when it refused to allow Bradlaugh either to take his seat without the oath, or to take the oath with a reservation: while everybody knew that among those who thus persecuted an honest unbeliever were many whose only differences from Bradlaugh, in this respect, were that they were dishonest.

But, as I said, the points at issue then were not those that divide us now. It is very difficult for us to understand the keenness with which multitudes followed the debate between Bradlaugh and the Rev. Dr. Baylee, which turned largely on such questions as whether Jael was right in murdering Sisera, or whether Deborah was inspired when she praised the deed. A lecture of Foote's had the title, "David, the man after God's own heart," which would hardly trouble a Plymouth Brother to-day, but frightened college professors in Victoria's time. The whole attitude of believers and "infidels" alike, has completely altered; and it requires a good deal of sympathetic study before we can appreciate the rival positions of fifty or sixty years ago.

Upon this confused chaos of rigid belief and crude scepticism there fell the shattering blow of the

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*Origin of Species*, which at once reduced to due proportions the questions that had fretted so many minds. This went straight to the heart of the problem and, as a great conflagration absorbs a small one, made all the hesitations about this miracle or that seem doubts about trifles. What mattered the miracles of Elisha when the point was whether the whole thing was not a huge delusion? If Darwinism was true, then it was futile to argue whether iron had once swum at the bidding of an ancient prophet. The real battle between science and orthodoxy was at last joined.

Darwin's book appeared in 1859. Although many men of science accepted its results, and even a few daring clergymen, unlike Bishop Wilberforce, were neither amused nor terrified by it, yet its real effect was not felt till that generation had died out. The great change came with the children who grew up in the following thirty years. These, untrammelled by their fathers' doubts and fears, welcomed Darwin without hesitation and were thus ready to welcome also a whole host of new ideas of every kind. The "Higher Criticism" came over from Germany in a flood, and only the old-fashioned lifted up a standard against it. I have seen no such rapid or complete change as that which took place in the eighties and nineties: it was like one of those "catastrophes" which the old geologists used to postulate in order to explain the alterations in the earth: sudden, immense, and I think irrevocable. There is far more difference between the mind of



1900 and that of 1880 than between 1880 and 1640. A good example may be found in the commentaries on Milton. Critics of 1850, like Addison and Johnson, treated the plot of *Paradise Lost* as, in essentials, *true*: those of the nineties, like those of to-day, apologise for it, and bid us treat it as we treat the theology of Homer and the cosmogony of Hesiod.

Men, however, still struck to their Churches. I knew many confirmed church-goers, excellent in every way, who owned in private that they were Darwinians, anti-Trinitarians, or even agnostics. But they would say, and I knew them to be sincere, that they felt it their duty "still to be neat, still to be drest" on Sundays, for there were still Church doctrines in which they believed, and, if they abandoned their church, more harm than good would result. "Why should I leave?" said a cultured and intelligent man to me. "Here is an organisation which is doing good, and in which I have grown up and can myself do good. Where can I find another in and with which I can work so easily and successfully? It is true it preaches some doctrines in which I do not believe, and others which I should express differently. But that is a comparatively small matter. This Church has the essentials: I will, to the best of my small power, support it, and I will avoid the scandal that might be caused if I broke away." Many others either said the same thing, or nodded agreement when it was said. Thus for many years the churches were still crowded, the

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Sunday was still a Sabbath, and the father guided his family into the pew and listened with outward reverence to the lessons and the sermon.

Gradually this sort of accommodation began to die down, though it is by no means dead yet. The idea that an example must be set, that church must be attended by respectable families at least once a Sunday, still prevails in many places. But it is yielding to the spirit of the age. To visit a church which one knew thirty years ago, when it was regularly crowded, and to see its present emptiness, is to be strongly reminded of the signs of the times. Sabbatarianism is a decaying cause. Whether this change is due to an increase of honesty, or to the attractions of the motor-car, the week-end, golf, and lawn tennis, may be doubted. At the same time, I cannot help feeling that, whether the liberty has degenerated into license or not, a certain increase of freedom was desirable. My own memories of the so-called "Puritan" Sunday are by no means so gloomy as those of some of my contemporaries. On the whole it was a cheerful day, especially after one had begun to go to school, and Sunday thus became a holiday. There were at any rate mitigations. The abundance of theological folios on the shelves enabled one to cover up a novel from prying eyes: Baxter's *Saint's Everlasting Rest* was a favourite for this purpose. I did not, however, feel like a friend of mine, who found a special delight in violating the Sabbath, and told me he hated the French Sunday because it was impossible to break it. There

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was always with me a slight twinge of conscience when I thus hid away *Ivanhoe* or *The Last Days of Pompeii* under a sacred and bulky tome. Amusing incidents were not lacking. I well remember the strange lapse of a parson who was staying in our house one week-end. Rousseau's *Confessions* happened to be lying on the study table. He took it up, glanced at it, and yielded to the spell. He read on, utterly oblivious of the holiness of the day, from eight to eleven. What recalled him to piety I do not know—perhaps it was hunger. At any rate he *was* recalled. "Dear me!" he said, "I had forgotten it was Sunday. But perhaps it is all right. It is a good thing to see to what depths a man can sink who has not the grace of God to guide him."

I did not tell him that he had committed a worse offence than he knew. One of the earliest books of piety I ever read pointed out that the Fourth Commandment begins, "*Remember* the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and that therefore to *forget* it is the prime iniquity. This remarkable doctrine had often consoled me for breaking the Sabbath on purpose: it was at any rate less serious than breaking it accidentally.

An exceedingly comfortable theory, very useful when conscience stung one for these and other sins, was that of the Age of Responsibility. There was a certain age ("certain" in the sense in which it is used of the ages of ladies) below which you could not be held accountable for your delinquencies. A baby, however "naughty," was safe for

heaven.<sup>1</sup> The question for me, then, was whether I had reached the fatal Rubicon. Up to six, perhaps, I was free from danger. At six, I postponed it to seven, at seven to eight: and in fact the margin faded for ever and for ever as I moved; until the horrible reflection occurred to me that if I could argue about responsibility I must be *ipso facto* responsible. As I had argued about it at five, this meant eight or nine responsible years, all crowded with sins mortal or venial—and mainly mortal. But my Head Master came to the rescue. He was reported, truly or falsely, to have said that he did not think any schoolboy responsible for his actions. He may have said it meaning that all boys were more or less lunatics. He certainly held them responsible enough to deserve the cane occasionally. Whatever his meaning, the saying *was* reported, and had a most soothing effect on many minds, of which mine was one.

Religion, like everything else, had its times of exaltation and depression; but, as far as those I knew were concerned, it was usually marked by a steady and serene cheerfulness. No mistake seems to

<sup>1</sup> I have, incredible as it may seem, heard sermons in which the frightful infant mortality of the time was actually utilised for the Miltonic purpose of justifying the ways of God to man. "You tell me," said a preacher, "that God is cruel for condemning so large a proportion of the human race to eternal punishment. But the proportion is not so large as you may think. St. Paul tells us that good heathens, who have never had the chance of hearing the truth, will be saved. But besides that, we have the *consolation* of knowing that perhaps half of our population dies in infancy. These, my brethren, are sure of heaven; for of such is the kingdom." This preacher, an Evangelical, though he believed in infant baptism, was no Augustinian. He was certain that, though baptism was efficacious, even unbaptised infants would not be condemned at the final assize. But he agreed with Augustine that there was no Limbo: the children would go straight to heaven.

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me more inexcusable than to think of Evangelicals as morose and stern killjoys. Almost the exact reverse, in my experience, was the case. I have seen men who, like Zachary Macaulay, could say that they did not know what lowness of spirits meant. John Wesley once owned to having been depressed for a total of fifteen minutes in fifty years; and I have seen men like Wesley in that respect. I never hope to see any human beings more uniformly cheerful than some saintly (though perhaps bigoted) persons I came across in my youth. Confident in the divine favour, certain that the "eternal God was their refuge, and that underneath were the everlasting arms," they took good fortune and ill with more than the equanimity of Horatio. Even when death came, and their dearest were taken from them, they were calm: the parting was but for a moment, and the sundered would meet once more in a better world. At funerals they habitually sang cheerful hymns by the grave-side. When we, their grandchildren, think of them as miserable, it is because we imagine that people can be happy only in *our* way. How can creatures who never went to the theatre, rarely attended a concert, and then only when the "good" Jenny Lind was singing, who never danced, and frowned on cards and billiards—how *could* they enjoy life? The fact is they enjoyed it to the full, and they would have said of *our* pleasures exactly what we say of theirs. This could be illustrated in scores of ways. It was easy enough for a Macaulay, who never went

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to the theatre till he was thirty, to say "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee": but Macaulay was one of those who could never have been made into convertites. What to him, as to so many to-day, appeared a bondage, was to his father perfect freedom. And ignorance of the stage was a thing to be proud of. An old gentleman once told me how he had nonplussed a man who was boasting of his theatrical experiences. "Have you ever heard Kean?" said the man. "Never." "Then where have you lived?" "Have *you* ever heard Thomas Binney?" "Never heard of him." "Then you have not lived at all." (Thomas Binney was a Nonconformist minister whose eloquence was held to rival that of Bright or Gladstone). I recall another conversation, of which I myself was an auditor, between a confirmed theatre-goer and an elderly Evangelical. "What!" cried the old man, after listening to an enthusiastic account of a popular play of the moment, "you call *that* pleasure! You've been boxed up in a stuffy building for three or four mortal hours, watching men and women grimacing, and you've taken no part in it yourself! I can't imagine anything more wearisome, especially when, to judge by what you've told me, the chances are that what you hear is rubbish. Now when I go to chapel, I take part in the hymns. I listen to a thoughtful discourse—not too long, never more than forty-five minutes—and not once in a dozen times do I fail to carry away something worth remembering.

There's enjoyment in *that*, if you like; but the thing you have been describing is the quintessence of dullness."<sup>1</sup>

I am not sure that the old gentleman was wrong. A carefully prepared sermon, delivered without a note and with unfailing fluency, *was* a pleasure to hear; more especially as it was taken to be irrefragable truth. When, as occasionally happened, the preacher's eloquence was of a high order, that pleasure was proportionally more intense, and it wore. Spurgeon, with his marvellous voice and his pure Saxon English, preached regularly to an audience of thousands, who never wearied of hearing him: and his Tabernacle was always crowded. No actor of the day was half so popular as he.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Parker,<sup>3</sup> in the City Temple, preached to overflowing audiences, not only on Sundays but on Thursdays: and these week-day services were constantly attended by actors and actresses, who

<sup>1</sup> It is possible even for a devotee of the theatre to agree, though on different grounds, with this old Evangelical. Could we restore the theatre of the mid-nineteenth century, I am sure that present-day theatre-goers would be driven to the churches for entertainment: for the plays of that time are of almost unbelievable dullness. A few, like the *Lady of Lyons*, may still be read with tepid interest; but the *Hunchback* and the *Love-Chase*, the masterpieces of Sheridan Knowles, would be tolerable only on a desert island where they were the sole books available: and the plays which came later are if possible more wearisome still. The authors, like Dogberry, seem resolved to "bestow all their tediousness" on their audiences. Modern playgoers have quite different experiences on which to base their opinions.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin at one time "sat under" Spurgeon. After a specially good sermon he would rush into the vestry and enthusiastically kiss the orator on both cheeks. Spurgeon, who had a British shyness, was not always pleased with the salute.

<sup>3</sup> Innumerable anecdotes were told about Parker. On one occasion, when he was striding up and down the room preparing a sermon, his wife came in to tell him the tailor was waiting to measure him. "Measure *me*!" he said in his deepest tones. "Measure the ocean—measure the Solar System—measure the universe—but measure *me*!"

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wished to learn what the human voice at its best, aided by gesture at its most expressive, could accomplish. Why should people to whom such a pleasure as this was open desire to go to the theatre? Had they gone, they would only have heard the pupils: in the City Temple they heard the master.

To dancing, of course, all Evangelicals were opposed. Not only did they ban the waltz, which was still subject, even in worldly circles, to some of the suspicion with which it was received when it first came in from Germany, and when, in Byron's phrase, the partners were like "two cock-chafers spitted on one bodkin." The waltz was but the worst of a bad class: all dances were dangerous. It is true that John Wesley had allowed some exceptions. He had no objection, he said, to dancing, provided it was of men with men, women with women, by daylight, and out of doors. There were others who were less lax. Readers of Trevelyan's *Cambridge Dionysia* will recall how, in the late fifties, the Reverend Mr. Clayton, successor of the famous Simeon, preached an annual but futile sermon against the Trinity College Bachelors' Ball; and how the most astonishing of all dreams (which, as is well known, go by contraries) was that of a college servant:

*I dreamed that I was waiting in the Hall  
Serving refreshments for the Bachelors' Ball ;  
There, gayest figure in the throng of dancers,  
Was Clayton cutting figures in the Lancers.*



Save in a dream, and that a dream of somebody else, neither Mr. Clayton nor any of his congregation, nor any Evangelical who respected his conscience, would ever have taken a single step in musical time. A Quaker who danced ceased to be a Quaker, and a Methodist, in similar circumstances, forfeited his ticket of membership. This feeling, in my time, was gradually evaporating; but it was still strong. I knew families (families were then large) which danced among themselves, but "privately, for fear of the Jews"; and I knew others which admitted intimate friends, young men whose characters could be guaranteed, to dance with their girls. But even these Laodiceans exercised a rigid supervision during the perilous performance:<sup>1</sup> Satan was as likely to find mischief in agile legs as in idle hands. I knew families, also, in which the elder children could not dance, but the younger either were taught or taught themselves. The parents were slowly giving way to the irresistible forces of the times. With the advent of the lukewarm eighties, and still more of the naughty nineties, the sin had practically ceased to be sinful, and, except in some of the stricter Dissenting bodies, was openly practised.

The same process, at about the same time, might have been observed in novel-reading. Evangelical literature is full of warnings against this "pernicious habit." One exception was made. Scott was

<sup>1</sup> Was Keats ironical when he spoke of "swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath"?

not only winked at but welcomed. He was safe—we knew it was his aim never to bring a blush to the cheek of innocence—and he was historical. You could learn facts from him; and the sternest “Puritan” would have agreed with Browning that “fiction which makes fact alive is fact too.” Later, with a certain timidity, Dickens was admitted to share a shelf with Scott; but injunctions were always added that light reading must never be allowed to interfere with serious. Here I cannot refrain from repeating a passage I have quoted elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> *True Womanhood*, by Joshua Priestley, 1859, is a biography of Eliza Hessel, a saintly Yorkshire woman, who, by reading, travel, and diligent self-help, made herself the very model of a cultured Victorian lady. Visiting London for the first time, she says, “I saw wealth, and beauty, and power, so closely connected with crime, suffering, and poverty, that I thought the enjoyment of the former must be marred by the presence of the latter. Perhaps I looked on everything with an intensity which might be attributed to my having seen it all in fancy’s glass, by the aid of that masterly delineator, Charles Dickens.” Here the biographer “feels it obligatory to add a word of admonition. By no means does he pronounce an indiscriminate condemnation on all such writings. A large portion of that kind of writing, however, ministers only to a morbid ‘taste,’ and depraves instead of elevating. Whatever aims at exciting the imagination only, and produces a distaste

<sup>1</sup> *Early Victorian England, 1830-1865*; vol. ii, p. 51.

for instructive books, merits unqualified condemnation. Let no one plead Miss Hessel's authority for light literature, who does not couple with it as much of solid." None the less, when once the breach was made, the enemy rushed in. Thackeray, George Eliot, Mrs. Oliphant, followed rapidly; and George MacDonald, who was indeed a preacher in the disguise of a novelist, had no difficulty in obtaining a hearing. It is true that Anthony Trollope was found too worldly for the columns of *Good Words*; but, for all his hatred of Dissent, he made his way into the most pious households; and Kingsley, who like Scott was both safe and historical, was to be seen in almost every cultured Evangelical house. "These were the prime in order and in might"; but very soon, like the inferior demons, myriads more "came flocking": and the reign of the novel was speedily undisputed. It was not by Evangelicals only that *Jane Eyre* was regarded as of low moral tendency; but that dangerous young woman contrived to pass the barriers of the sternest religionism of every type.<sup>1</sup> Not much later, it became the habit of preachers to use novels as the theme of sermons; and how many good sellers passed into the superlative degree because a popular orator had spoken of them in the pulpit would be hard to calculate.

<sup>1</sup> The notorious review in the *Quarterly*, by Elizabeth Rigby, afterwards Lady Eastlake, expressed the feeling of many who were far removed from the Evangelical standpoint. Fifty years later, I was told by a nephew of Lady Eastlake that nothing in her life had caused her more regret. This change in one person is typical of an almost universal change which these years had brought about. But the later attitude was as Victorian as the earlier. A reign of sixty years cannot be either praised or condemned off-hand.

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But here again one must be careful not to judge the pleasures of others by ours. Instead of novels, our grandfathers had a large and fascinating literature of their own, which, if this generation would consent to read it, might drive out the detective novel. Apart from the slightly heavy Victorian style, the religious biography of the nineteenth century is intensely interesting and often exciting. Missionaries like Livingstone were then the great explorers, and their narratives would sometimes have drawn Desdemona from inclining to Othello. The lives of John Hunt and William Carey are "thrillers" in the full sense of the word; and that of John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, is as good as *Revolt in the Desert*. These are only one or two out of scores that could be mentioned; and, provided only that a man can take an interest in books ungarnished with a single oath, he will find in them all the zest of the highest romance. There are no adventures ever recorded, not even those of Odysseus, more marvellous or soul-stirring than those of Adoniram Judson, the American missionary to Burmah: his patient endurance, his dauntless courage, his simple piety, are miraculous. What is perhaps still more wonderful is that his three wives shared all his trials with him, and showed equal courage and devotion.

And there was endless variety. If you wanted a touch of the antique, you read the *Tracts* of John Eliot, the Apostle of the Red Indians, or George Fox's Journals; if you were martially inclined, there

was Doddridge's *Colonel Gardiner*, or Catherine Marsh's *Captain Hedley Vicars*. A man must be blasé indeed who can read any of these without feeling his heart "stirred as with the sound of a trumpet": and our ancestors were not so very absurd in thinking that with books like these they had no need to search out fictitious heroes and imaginary journeys. If indeed they *did* desire such things, they had only to take down the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Less exciting, but not less absorbing, were the lives of stay-at-home saints. There was, for instance, the Biography of John Fletcher of Madeley, a man who will easily stand comparison with Francis of Assisi. The Quaker had his John Woolman, a traveller it is true, but a quietist: quaint, superstitious, noble, absolutely simple and sincere; who accomplished by gentle talk and by the transparent beauty of his character more than dozens of men do by restless action and force. For a picture of country-life, what could be better than the *Dairyman's Daughter*?

That these books are as interesting as novels are supposed to be, is shown, if by nothing else, by their popularity. They circulated by hundreds of thousands, even in some cases by millions. No list of best-sellers could omit them: and every purchased copy meant at least a dozen readers, for they were passed from house to house; nay, each reader meant on an average half a dozen readings, for they were pored over till they were known almost by heart.

Cards, as everybody knows, were the devil's

picture-books. Played even for counters, and still more for money, they were looked upon with horror. It was rarely that parents thrashed their children; prayer was more efficacious than the rod recommended by Solomon; but card-playing was regarded as one of the cases in which the *ultima ratio* was fully justified. There were, however, means of evading the prohibition. I knew an Evangelical minister, no mean artist, who adorned a pack of cards with really beautiful pictures of flowers, in four colours. The rose was the Queen, the tulip the King. So long as this pack was exclusively used, whist was permitted in his house. I seem to remember, however, that "diamonds" and "hearts" were words never heard; and that "trump" was carefully avoided—possibly on the ground suggested by J. K. Stephen, that the note of the last trump is presumably "D" natural. Such subterfuges were, however, rare. I knew a man who was a passionate devotee both of whist and of chess. He became a leader of a class of young men, and—after a painful struggle—gave up both games as an example to his lads; for though he felt they were harmless to *him*, he feared they might prove snares to *them*. St. Paul's remark about the weak brother weighed strongly with him. The same feeling prevailed about billiards—for which indeed there was little opportunity except in public-houses. It was not till later that the wealthier gentlemen began to provide billiard-rooms in their homes. Even then, however, there was some hesitation. "Mr. So-and-so

plays *billiards* after dinner" was, as I well remember, spoken with bated breath. How could such conduct be consistent with a Christian profession?

But I must again insist that these restrictions, numerous as they were, did not diminish the real happiness of the household. Two things, in especial, must be kept in mind. Those were the days of family-life, and the family-life was varied with church or chapel entertainments.

First, family-life—a phenomenon which is now almost as antiquated as the hansom-cab.<sup>1</sup> Every evening the family would gather in the "parlour." Possibly, if liberal-minded, the father would light his cigar and repose in comfort in the easy-chair. The mother would knit, the girls would sew or embroider. The son would read aloud the week's *Spectator*, and Hutton's articles would never fail to be demanded: or he would be asked to read on where he had left off the night before in *David Copperfield* or *Pendennis*, either of which was guaranteed safe. Or sometimes still higher literature was called for. The father himself might be a worshipper of Milton, who had the advantage of being fit for Sundays: and—as I have seen in more than one house—he would read aloud the "mighty harmonies" of *Paradise Lost* from beginning to end. This, if not exactly mirth, was a pleasure which "after no repenting drew."

But there might be a missionary meeting or

<sup>1</sup> I speak more fully of this later.

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other church-gathering, which I deliberately called above an "entertainment." It was as exciting as a Hollywood film to hear a missionary describe, perhaps "with advantages," his hairbreadth escapes, and fantastic adventures. One of them might have been through all the thrills of the Indian Mutiny, and he certainly communicated the thrills to his audience. Another, whom I heard myself, had invaded a cannibalistic Pacific island, and had run serious risk of providing the natives with a sacred meal. A third had witnessed, in Canadian wilds, a battle between three bison and a grizzly bear, in which, after an hour of alternating fortune, the single combatant, like Horatius, had prevailed over the odds, but, unlike him, had died of wounds shortly afterwards. To hear, from the lips of the actual eye-witnesses, such stories as these, was enough to make up for being deprived of the theatre. It was as if we were seeing John Williams or Eliot, no longer in books, but in the flesh : who wanted to see Irving after this ?

It is indeed almost impossible to exaggerate the part played by church or chapel in the lives of its adherents. It took, by itself, the place now hardly filled by theatre, concert-hall, cinema, ballroom, and circulating-library put together. Here were all things required for social intercourse : recitals, songs, lectures with or without the lantern, authorised games, and talk. It was a liberal education. Politics were freely discussed, books criticised and lent, music, and that not merely sacred, appraised. It



was, in fact, the nearest approach I can think of to the agora of ancient Athens, where Socrates posed his questions, and the Acharnian charcoal-burners compared the claims of war and peace. It may have been a small and narrow society, but it was one which pulsed with life.

Nor would I forget the practice it afforded in public speaking. Almost everybody, from very early youth, was encouraged in this art. Certainly I never happened to see a child of eight set on the seat of a pew, like Edmund Gosse, to give his "experience"; but lads of seventeen or eighteen not only spoke in the literary societies, but were often utilised as local preachers in the pulpits. They thus became almost too confident, skilled in dealing with interruptions, and masters of repartee. It was in surroundings like these that men like Bright and Chamberlain learnt their oratory; and the young men I knew were, in their smaller sphere, Brights and Chamberlains. When, as often happened, they became Town Councillors, their practice aided them in swaying their tongue-tied colleagues. I well remember the amazement of one of them, on a visit to the House of Commons, at the hums and haws of the speakers. He had never heard anything of the kind in his "Quarterly" or "Monthly" meetings. I fear the visit did not increase his respect for our legislators.

Some of the eloquence thus cultivated might not always, it is true, satisfy a fastidious taste. Justin M'Carthy once spoke of the "fearful

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fluency " of certain of his Home Rule colleagues; and I have often thought of the phrase when listening to orators trained in the school I have described. With one or two very remarkable exceptions, all the Nonconformist ministers I heard were extempore speakers—that is, they prepared the substance of their sermons, but left the words to the inspiration of the moment. This, of course, vastly increased the force of their appeals—when the inspiration came; a sermon read from a manuscript, or one learnt by heart, can scarcely ever vie with one which has a touch of spontaneity. But when there is no real inspiration, and yet the flood of words is unimpeded, the critical hearer is sometimes offended or amused. I remember one preacher whose system, apparently, was to prepare a short discourse, and multiply it by three during the process of delivery, utilising for the purpose the abundance of synonyms which marks our language. "If there be anything that hinders, if there be anything that obstructs, if there be anything that opposes, nevertheless let us advance, let us proceed, let us go forward."<sup>1</sup> By this method he easily made a discourse of ten minutes into one of half an hour. Some of the rhetoric, again, whether prepared or not, was a little too sublime—like the elevated passages of Ossian. I once heard a famous orator bid "the puny Greek unperch himself from his pigmy Parnassus"; and another informed his

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mozley, in his *Reminiscences*, tells of an Anglican clergyman whose method was exactly similar to that of this Nonconformist orator.

audience that "patience sits like an angel on the uplifted finger of the mother as she shakes it at the young rebel." A third, speaking on Livingstone, described the negroes of Africa as "black as the starless sky."

Similar features marked the extempore effusions in prayer-meetings. Gravelled for lack of matter, one worshipper suddenly electrified his hearers by saying, "Now, Lord, I will tell Thee an anecdote": and I have heard a whole parable, somewhat damaged in the repetition, declaimed as an episode in a prayer long enough without it. A sarcastic youth, after listening to one of these performances, remarked, "I understand now that verse in the hymn, 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.' If he has any literary taste, he may well tremble."

There were preachers who were too dramatic and realistic. "Look at that man," cried a theatrical pulpiteer, pointing straight at a well-known and harmless gentleman in his audience, "look at him, steeped in every vice, plunged in debauchery, soused in sin." To the gentleman's obvious embarrassment, the audience did look at him.

Some preached with zeal, but not always according to knowledge. A lay preacher chose the word *Selah* as his text, announcing that he had observed with sorrow that it had been neglected by his predecessors. It was, however, in the Bible, and and was therefore inspired. As for the reading of the lessons, I have heard some curious lapses.

"Snatch-a-crab King of Assyria" is a monarch unknown to history, but an enthusiastic reader gave him a brief immortality. Another, obviously believing that the Bible was originally written in French, spoke of the unfeigned faith which was in Timothy, and in his mother Euneece, and in his grandmother Lwah.

But these were exceptional. There was sound judgment in many congregations, and a taste almost too severe in many preachers. A retired minister, having had to listen to one of the flowery discourses to which I have alluded, marched solemnly and silently home. He took his seat in his chair by the fire, to ponder over the ordeal he had been through. "Mary," he said to his daughter, "fill my pipe." For twenty minutes he smoked in reflective nicotian silence. "Mary, fill it again." Twenty more minutes. "Fill it again," and, having finished an hour's lucubrations, he at last gave utterance to his considered opinion on the discourse and its author. "That man," said he with gruff finality, "is a fool." "If ever," he advised a young speaker on another occasion, "you have written something you think particularly fine, cut it out. Perhaps you think the whole speech fine. Then cut it all out."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Much later, I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Balfour, who, for once in his life, found himself in Nonconformist surroundings, and must have asked himself '*que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère ?*' His own oratory was of the House of Commons order—to put it favourably, it was deliberate, and admitted frequent pauses. A vote of thanks was proposed, and he prepared himself for the usual stuttering platitudes. In a moment or two he turned round and listened fascinated. Here was an extempore speech, delivered without hesitation, choice in expression, and perfectly balanced, with

## AS I REMEMBER

When I emphasise the cheerfulness and serenity of the lives among which I moved, I may well be faced with the question, "How could people possibly be cheerful when their doctrines were so gloomy?" Were not those the days in which the "judgment sermon" was habitually preached, when eternal punishment was believed in, and when the hymns were, as often as not, pictures of hell-fire?

This is indeed a question worth putting and one which demands an answer. The "judgment sermon" was beginning, but only beginning, to die out in my childhood. The hymn-book still contained the verse:

*Shall I, amidst a ghastly band,  
Dragged to the judgment-seat,  
Far on the left with horror stand,  
My dreadful doom to meet?*

though I never heard it sung. I heard, however, some sermons in which the dreadful doom of sinners was proclaimed with an eloquence resembling Whitefield's as he spoke with tears of the wrath of God. But these were usually preached by older men; and I remember how one aged minister, defending himself for delivering such a discourse, said solemnly, "I am seventy-five, and I feel it my duty before the last call comes, to put before

beginning, middle and end. It was clear that Balfour was not accustomed to finish of this kind; indeed he owned in private that, except from Bright and Gladstone, he had heard nothing like it. This speaker had been trained from youth in the way I have described.

my people the darker side of revelation. It is *there*, in the words of Christ himself, and I fear I have been in the past too timid in enforcing the lesson.”<sup>1</sup>

As for the eternity of the punishment, I am old enough to recall the sensation caused by Farrar’s *Eternal Hope*, and the long arguments on the exact significance of the word *aionios*. Farrar was undoubtedly heretical; a brother canon wrote an article telling him plainly that, as an ordained minister of the Church of England, it was his *duty* to believe in everlasting torment: he was a traitor within the gates. On the other side of Church opinion, Pusey’s famous declaration that sin after baptism was “irreparable” was still remembered and approved. In Evangelical circles, though Farrar was read, few accepted his results, and perhaps fewer still agreed with Dr. White’s *Life in Christ*, which suggested that stubborn sinners might hope for annihilation, and believers confidently expect an eternal existence of joy. “As the tree falls, so must it lie” were the words not only of Scripture but of one of the most popular of

<sup>1</sup> Judgment sermons, as they were called, could sometimes be amusing. One, preached at school in my youth, was never forgotten by those who heard it. “We must all appear before that tribunal,” cried the orator. “The greatest will not escape. Napoleon Bonaparte will be there.” A solemn pause. “I myself shall be there.”

Amid all the bigotry there was also much liberality. When Maurice was turned out of his professorship in King’s College, London, for his lax views on Eternal Punishment, he received many tokens of sympathy. The Church of St. Edward, in Cambridge, is free from control, and the presentation is in the gift of two or three colleges. These colleges, to mark their opinion of Maurice, elected him to the incumbency of this church. The first vote my Head Master gave as Fellow of one of these colleges was for this purpose; and he told me that, though he did not agree with Maurice’s theology, no vote he ever gave afforded him more satisfaction.

hymns, sung in churches and chapels of all denominations. It might well be thought that people whose fixed belief was so terrible, would be plunged in ceaseless gloom. As is well known, it was this doctrine, indubitably orthodox, that James Mill constantly impressed on his son John, in order to ensure that he should never be led astray by the hated system of Christianity.

Those who thus reason, however, forget the almost unlimited capacity of the human race for holding in its mind at the same time two or more wholly incompatible ideas: and the Victorians were in this respect not different from their ancestors or their descendants. They could preach the infinite mercy of God while proclaiming his ruthless and implacable fury; and, as we have seen, they could quote the words of Jesus on the Tower of Siloam while simultaneously talking of Providential "judgments." Precisely similarly, I have watched, within the last few months, a gentleman of unimpeachable benevolence chanting with gusto the words of the fifty-eighth Psalm, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the ungodly." That gentleman, I believe, is a strong opponent of blood-sports and of capital penalties. Candid examination of ourselves will reveal that we are all like him.

The right comparison, perhaps, is between our grandfathers' cheery acceptance of the eternal damnation of others and our own not less cheery acceptance of the horrors of the slums. We

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sympathise, we detest, and we try, in our measure, to alleviate the misery; but we do not go about in perpetual gloom: we eat our dinners and we play our games. Similarly, in the seventies and eighties, men knew the destiny of sinners; they felt their woes, they hated the sin that caused them, and they endeavoured, by example and warning, "to save poor souls out of the fire, to snatch them from the flames of hell"; but it was not in human nature to think of nothing else. There were also all sorts of devices by which they lightened the burden of the appalling doctrine. Who could put bounds to the power and mercy of God, which could save to the uttermost and at the last moment? Though there were many books describing, in fearful language, the death-bed of the wicked, there were also loopholes for escape. Men did not quite approve of Shenstone's remark that the clergy could give a jerk to the tree and make it fall in the requisite position; but no quotation was oftener on their lips than the old jingle,

*Between the saddle and the ground  
I mercy sought, I mercy found;*

the principle being precisely the same as that by which Dante contrived to save the soul of Manfred:

*After I had my body lacerated  
By these two mortal stabs, I gave myself  
Weeping to Him, who willingly doth pardon.*



## AS I REMEMBER

*Horrible my iniquities had been,  
But infinite goodness hath such ample arms,  
That it receives whatever turns to it.*

I often heard repeated a famous sentence on the two robbers who were crucified with Christ. "We are told of one sinner promised Paradise at the last moment—that none may despair; and of only one—that none may presume."

Of rejoicing *in* the sufferings of the damned, such as pollutes the pages of Tertullian, Augustine, or Jonathan Edwards, there was none. Those who most fervently believed in the eternity of punishment were the tenderest in sympathy, and the most active in the endeavour, before it was too late, to rescue their fellows from the impending doom; and when, as they imagined, they had succeeded even in a single case, their joy was like that of the angels in heaven.

When then I read novels or autobiographies of Victorians, who have survived into our time, and who speak of themselves as Baron Trencks or Silvio Pellicos who have at last emerged into the open air after imprisonment in a dungeon of gloom, all I can say is that, while I fully accept their statements, they must have lived in very different surroundings from those which I recall. Evangelical religion, as I saw it, I repeat, was a cheerful and a joyous religion, and more joyous in proportion to its depth and sincerity. The dungeon, if it *was* a dungeon was like that in which Paul and Silas

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prayed and sang hymns to God: and the prisoners had no desire to leave it. Those who dwell on its narrowness and darkness can never have seen, as I have often seen, humble privates of the Salvation Army, after being beaten, stoned, or otherwise maltreated, and then punished by magistrates for their sufferings. The faces of these martyrs, as I can personally bear witness, might be scarred with wounds, but they shone with joy. If this is misery and gloom, then it might be well for the present generation if it could be similarly gloomy and miserable.

It is common to accuse Victorians, especially Nonconformist Victorians, of a lack of artistic taste, or, worse, of a taste utterly bad and perverted. Looking at the Albert Memorial or at West's "acres of spoiled canvas," hearing such specimens of Victorian music as have survived, or struggling with the pomposities of Early Victorian prose-style, and comparing all this with the obvious enlightenment of these days, people incline to fancy that, while they enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land, their fathers, "living on the other side of the flood in old time," were a horde of semi-barbarians. It adds to their sense of self-satisfaction that, in so few years, they have made so enormous an advance.

Even as regards Nonconformists, I think this feeling exaggerated. In the first place, taste varies, and it by no means follows that taste is bad because

it varies from one's own. An antimacassar may be ridiculous to one generation, an ornament to another, and ridiculous again to the next: who is to decide? A style in music or painting may come in, go out, and return, and every change may be regarded as an improvement. Gothic architecture was detested in the eighteenth century, admired in the nineteenth. Those who recall the first introduction of Chinese and Japanese art into England will remember the pained superiority with which it was judged. A Chinese exhibition, like that which has recently been so enthusiastically visited, would then have been contemptuously passed by. Who can say that ere long, if perspective comes again to be regarded as important, the old opinion may not be revived?

But, so far as Nonconformity is concerned, the judgment may be to *some* extent justified. At all times, and in all nations, when religion is a vital matter, art and ornament tend to be despised, as making too much of mundane things. Those who dislike the ostentatious plainness of Quaker or Salvation Army dress, must at the same time dislike St. Peter's injunction to the women of Pontus, Cappadocia, and Galatia, "whose ornament was not to be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel."

None the less, many Nonconformist homes contrived to combine religious strictness with a love of art; and not a few distinguished artists, of various kinds, sprang from such homes. The Royal

Academy, wrote Macaulay in 1839, ought not to turn out Nollekens for being a Catholic, Bacon for being a Methodist, or Flaxman for being a Swedenborgian. Had it done so, it would have lost considerable numbers of sculptors and painters in addition to those three. A few years later the numbers would have been doubled. The Ruskin household, despite the large portions of the Bible which the young John had to learn by heart, was certainly not inartistic; and, in a different form of culture, Robert Browning's was equally liberal. That excellent but unsuccessful painter, James Smetham, came from a Wesleyan family into the society of Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites: and—if the religion of artists were as closely studied as that of poets—the discoveries would be surprising. That few Victorian artists would have been able to live without Nonconformist purchasers of their wares is certain: the wealthy manufacturers of the North and of the Midlands delighted to adorn their walls with the works of contemporary painters. Like other patrons, they may sometimes have done this from ostentation; but with many of them the motive was pure love of beauty.

In justification of the censures passed on Nonconformity in this regard, stress has been laid, by Dean Inge among others, on the "ostentatious ugliness" of Dissenting chapels: and the soft impeachment may be owned. Many of them were undoubtedly marvels of repulsiveness, though undoubtedly they were often far more comfortable,

warmer, and less draughty than certain Anglican churches I could name, in one of which the organist remarked that he was kept in his seat by opposing winds. But Dean Inge might remember the theory on which the Bethels and Zions were built. They were intended to illustrate the principle that worship can be paid *anywhere*, that one place is not more sacred than any other, and that the plainest synagogue is as well fitted, if "two or three" be gathered in it, for the divine presence as Herod's Temple itself. "God," it was held, "dwelleth not in temples made with hands"; and meeting-houses were therefore often deliberately built by architects whose occupation, like Kent's, was to be plain.

This was not the universal Nonconformist view. Many churches were as beautiful as skill and money could make them; and some men, of an artistic turn, did not disguise their feelings. One minister, who had been trained as an architect, having to take the reopening service in a chapel which had been "renovated," glanced round with unconcealed horror, and, when the due moment came, announced as his text, "How dreadful is this place"—a singularly appropriate one, and that not merely because the chapel bore the name Bethel, in memory of the very spot where the words were first uttered.

The same might be said of the music, which at one time, as in the churches described by Thomas Hardy, was led by a band. The substitution of a professional organist for this band led, in the

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twenties, to a serious schism in the Methodist denomination—a catastrophe curiously paralleled, as a Rabbi told me, among the Jews some years later. When an organ—an instrument unknown to the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>—was introduced into his synagogue, a large part of the congregation broke away.

The band was not always of the highest order, and a musical doctor, called out to a case just before its performance of Jackson's *Te Deum*, remarked that he was taken away from the evil to come. Some of the hymn-tunes, also, were of a peculiar kind, with endless repetitions—it was almost a rule that the last line of every verse should be sung at least twice—nor did the enthusiasm of the congregation invariably make up for the cacophony or for the ridiculous collocations which sometimes occurred. Old people still recall such grotesqueries as “And take a pill, and take a pill, and take a pilgrim to the skies,” or “Come down Sal, come down Sal, come down salvation from above.” That such things should have survived a single performance is one of the anomalies, which no mass-psychology seems able to explain.

By my own time, the band had disappeared from most chapels, and the organ, usually with a trained musician to “preside at it,” was almost universal. Some churches, like the Union Chapel, Islington, under Dr. Allon, had a choir which would not have disgraced King's College in Cambridge; and there were others not far behind it.

<sup>1</sup> The word translated “organ” should be rendered “pipe.”

But there was always the immovable resolve that congregational singing should not suffer. The hymn-tunes should be familiar, so that everybody could take part in them: the choir might sing an anthem by itself, and the organist might have his voluntary; but, in the hymns, organ and choir must merely lead the people. General singing, as John Wesley had maintained, must be one of the chief parts of the worship. Nor is it easy to exaggerate the compelling effect of a good popular tune when sung by a thousand voices. Those who have heard a Welsh congregation sing Joseph Parry's "Aberystwyth" are not likely to forget it.<sup>1</sup> This view, that the hearers should take an active part in the service, and that the hymns should provide one of the main opportunities for their doing so, is, if not a *distinctive* mark of Nonconformity, almost an essential feature; and it has sometimes had to be enforced, both by minister and by congregation, against a too "highbrow" organist. I have known the latter declare that he could not bring himself to play a certain tune—it violated all the canons of harmonic art. But the minister, on the ground that his people liked it, had his way. A very distinguished organist, a close friend of my own, had, in his youth, composed a tune which speedily became immensely popular: but his maturer taste

<sup>1</sup> It is true that sometimes the delight of the congregation is merely in the noise. A school's singing of "Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing" at the conclusion of the last Sunday service of term, is a case in point: and I have heard a story of a schoolboy, whose ordained elder brother was coming to preach in the school chapel. "If you don't choose 'Crown Him Lord of All' as the last hymn," wrote the youth, "you'd better stay away altogether."

did not approve of it. "It kept," he said, "the same key all through: it ought to have modulated into one of the related keys": and he proposed to alter it. He mentioned his design to the Principal of a Children's Home, himself a good amateur musician, who saw to it that his children should be trained to sing. "Leave the tune alone," the Principal advised. "Thousands of people, my young charges included, know it and love it as it is; you will only fret them if you change it, even though you change it for the better." The musician took the advice, and the tune, faulty or not, is still sung with delight by thousands.

Not all musicians would have acted like my friend. There is a story, and a true one, of the organist of a University college whose idea was that he should play, the choir sing, and the congregation listen and admire. Finding that there were some who disagreed with him, he pasted a notice in the pews, requesting that the occupants should refrain from singing. One man, however, defied the injunction, and took his part with some vigour. The organist picked him out, and, when the service was over, buttonholed him. "Didn't you see the notice?" "Oh, yes." "Then why did you disregard it?" "Because I did not see why I should not take my share in the service, especially as it was in the house of God." "Let me tell you," was the exasperated reply, "this isn't the house of God; it's a college chapel."

It is true that sometimes the most broad-minded



organist might have been justified in putting up his notice, at least in certain pews. In one of the most famous colleges in England, and one particularly celebrated for its music, the Head was distinguished alike for his knowledge of Greek and for his total ignorance of tune. Never, by any chance, did he contrive to hit on the right note; but, like so many tone-deaf people, he loved the sound of his own voice, and took care that others should hear it. Across the voices of the choir these cacophonies cut like the rending of linen or the scraping of a saw. The organist stood this for many months; but at last, after a particularly horrible performance, his feelings overcame him. Meeting the Vice-master, he said, "You can tell the Master that if he sings again like that, I shall resign my post." The Vice-master carried the message. "I am asked by Dr. Jones to say that if you sing, as he expresses it, 'like that,' he will resign." "What does he mean by 'like that'?" asked the astonished Master. "Why, as you *do* sing." "I was not aware that there was anything remarkable in my singing," said the Master, "but if Dr. Jones dislikes it, I suppose I must refrain: but it will be a great deprivation." Though no musician, he was a good Christian, and did by the organist as he would be done by. It is said that he once forgot himself and sang as of old; but he sent a letter of apology the same evening. I have often wished we had more organists of that kind, and more untuneful people who would show the spirit of that humble-minded scholar.

## CHAPTER V

### POLITICS

I HAVE ALREADY REFERRED to the keenness with which political questions were followed in Victorian times, but there is much more to say on that point. The society by which I was surrounded, when it was not talking books, religion, or business, was always talking politics; or rather, it talked politics as inseparable from religion and business. I cannot recall a time when, over the breakfast table, the Parliamentary speeches were not discussed, or Acts of Parliament analysed. But in a sense my second-hand knowledge goes back far beyond my own day, for I used to hear comparisons of Parnell with O'Connell as an agitator or of Salisbury with Clarendon as a Foreign Minister. I might call this a "telescopic" memory, which enables me to extend my recollections beyond the natural distance. With the help of this borrowed instrument I can, as I have said, go back, in fragmentary fashion, even to the eighteenth century.

It then ceases to function for a while, though, having seen Mr. Gladstone, I can boast of a distant acquaintance with one who recollected the return of Canning for Liverpool at the General Election of 1812. I then pass over twenty years, till I come,

in this vicarious way, to the Reform Bill of 1832, many of the exciting incidents of which are almost as vivid to me as if I had seen them with my own eyes. As for the "Hungry Forties," several of my older friends had been through that terrible time, and had much to say about it. In 1906, when the question of "Tariff Reform" came before the people, I was present when an old man said to a young one, "I went through the Hungry Forties, and nothing on earth will induce me to vote for a tax on food."

It is in this manner that I recall, almost as if I had heard them myself, the speeches of Kossuth, the Hungarian exile: for those who had actually heard them never forgot their astonishment at his marvellous eloquence and command of English. Certainly he was beyond comparison the greatest foreign orator that ever visited our shores: he spoke our language as Conrad, fifty years later, wrote it. John Bright himself was loud in admiration. The speeches were adorned with apt quotations from Shakespeare; it was said that during his imprisonment in Turkey he had beguiled the time with learning many of the greater plays by heart, and he used his knowledge with effect. It is certain, also, that he was aided greatly by the sympathy of his audience; for the savage cruelty with which the revolution had been put down had deeply stirred the British mind. This feeling was almost too clearly shown when the "woman-flogger" General Haynau visited England, and the draymen

of Barclay and Perkins were only just prevented from giving him a taste of his own medicine. It was much like the feeling shown to-day for the victims of Nazi tyranny; and when the chief victim was himself seen, and declaimed against Austrian cruelty in the tongue of Shakespeare and with the faith and manners of Milton, the enthusiasm was indescribable. It was, indeed, too keen; for it was some time before I realised, as many certainly failed to realise at the time, that one main cause of Kossuth's defeat was his refusal to give to the Croats and other races of the kingdom the liberty he demanded for his own Magyars.

After the forties, my second-hand memory becomes gradually clearer and more continuous. I can see, through the eyes of others, the crowds which thronged the Great Exhibition of 1851,<sup>1</sup> and share with them their short-lived expectations of a world-peace, to be established on the foundation of mutual trade-benefits. War, alas, soon came with all its disillusion; and I have felt, with the men of 1855, the sickness of hope constantly deferred experienced by those who were waiting month after month, for the news of the fall of Sebastopol. One of my school drill-sergeants, a grey-haired veteran, had himself served in the Crimea, and—when he ought to have been teaching us to march—halted us to tell us some lurid stories. One of these I hope

<sup>1</sup> The impression made by the mere character of the building was remarkable: Paxton's success in making something permanent out of so brittle a material struck people's imagination. A Cornish servant of ours, arriving at Paddington, amused the porters by inquiring if it was not the Crystal Palace.

was sheer invention, but I fear was exactly true. A line of infantry was charging a battery, and the hostile guns picked off particular men—I think every fifth man—at regular intervals. Whenever this happened, the commander, instead of utilising the gap to save lives, gave the regulation order, “Centre close,” and the mechanical slaughter went on with perfect precision. I was twelve years old when I heard this story, and even then wondered why the men did not disobey the command. The sergeant spoke of their obedience as heroic: we all thought it stupid, and many of us were set against war from that time forward. Even to have the chance of being nursed by Florence Nightingale, whose name was still a household word, seemed scarcely a compensation for such risks.<sup>1</sup>

Next came the Mutiny—years before my time, but contemporary nevertheless. A missionary who, in his childhood, had escaped from the rebels described to us with amazing vividness the thrills of his flight; though, as he was a born *raconteur*, I have my suspicions that a good deal of *Dichtung* mingled with his *Wahrheit*. The “new hat and stick” which Sir Walter Scott said it was hard not to give to a story, were the regular equipment of this gentleman’s narratives. But they made his tales live; and they gave the spirit, if not the prose fact, of those times. And I have heard people speak, years after the event, with bated breath, of the

<sup>1</sup> The first anagram I ever heard was made out of Florence Nightingale’s name—“Flit on, cheering angel.” This was talked of almost as if it had been a Providential “dispensation.”

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horrors of that war, till I could almost fancy I had been in it myself.

The savageries were by no means exclusively on one side. A man told me that he went out in 1857 in one of the last of John Company's ships. He was then a lad of seventeen, eager for adventure. He soon had enough of it. When he landed, he found the Mutiny in full swing, and enlisted at once. The fog of war descended on his regiment—a fog of more than Cimmerian blackness. "How did you get your information?" I asked. "A simple method," he answered with a touch of pride. "When we took a prisoner, and suspected he knew of the enemy's whereabouts, we questioned him. If he was obstinate, a lighted match under one armpit would generally do the trick. If that failed one under the other."

There were, however, better things to talk of. I can still hear the tone in which the religious people spoke of Havelock as that rare phenomenon, a "Christian soldier."<sup>1</sup> Havelock, and Hedley Vicars, were two favourite proofs that even soldiers, like rich men, might, though with difficulty, enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

As for the American Civil War, the influence of which upon our political and social life is still felt, I lived through it though not yet born. It was impossible to avoid it. When I was very young, a black man called on us. He was the first negro I had

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Soldier, or Heaven Taken by Storm*, was the title of the book (by Thomas Watson) which converted Colonel Gardiner. This book was in our library, and I was familiar with it from childhood.

ever seen, and I was shocked that a man should visit us so obviously unwashed. But when convinced that the dirt was the act of God, we children hung on his words. He told us about the "auction-block," the escapes, the tortures; and the elder children, to whom *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been read aloud from end to end, listened entranced and made him tell story after story. When he finally told them that he had himself seen "Eliza" crossing the river on the ice, the excitement knew no bounds. This man was as good a tale-teller as Uncle Remus himself. After he had gone, we were told how slavery had been put down, and what a great part Harriet Beecher Stowe had played in the work.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the people I knew had heard Mrs. Stowe's brother, Henry Ward Beecher, during his visit to England, and would tell of the fearful dangers he ran, and of the armed ruffians who meant to kill him, but, "by Divine Providence," were prevented. On one occasion, when the hostility, though ferocious, was less murderous, Beecher gained a hearing in a characteristically ingenious fashion. Leaning over to the front row, he told one of his best Yankee stories. Those who heard it laughed. Their neighbours asked the reason and the tale was passed along the row, which was convulsed with merriment. The row behind soon wanted to hear the tale, and ere long the

<sup>1</sup> The phrase used by one eulogist of Mrs. Stowe was "The Lord had delivered this Sisera into the hand of a woman."

infection spread to the rows behind. When a sufficient number of people had been interested, Beecher raised his hand, and the audience was silent. "I'll tell you *that* story," said he: and then he told two or three more. Very soon he had the crowd in a good humour, and slid imperceptibly into his real theme, the defence of the North. No ambassador could have been better,<sup>1</sup> and certainly no soldier at Chickamauga or Gettysburg had run greater risks.

Some years later, we moved to Manchester; and here it was not long before I noticed that the business men had a curious way of dating. Every event was spoken of as before or after the Cotton Famine. "Mr. So-and-so is better off now even than before the Famine": "Mr. Somebody-else is getting over the Famine at last." It is just as people to-day talk of pre-war or post-war things. Not unnaturally, I asked what this meant; and the men who had been through the time described the awful poverty, the starvation, the bankruptcies, and discussed the causes both of the disaster and of the recovery so clearly and vigorously that the Civil War was a vivid thing to me at ten years old. When, years afterwards, I read the histories and

<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, long before my time: but I had the good fortune to hear Beecher lecture on his later visit to England. There was, men's memories being short and their minds fickle, no antagonism to be overcome on this occasion; but there was the same humour. He was speaking on Democracy, and wanted to show that if you raise the lower classes you raise the higher. "In Chicago," he said in his telling Yankee accent, "I once saw a whole house being lifted and removed; and I took notice"—here he paused, and his drawl became very impressive—"I took notice that as the basement was raised the roof went up too."



Mrs. Gaskell's novels, I seemed to be merely hearing again what I had heard before. Old ministers, also, spoke with sympathy of one of the minor tragedies of the time—the ruin and death of Sir William Atherton, who, as Attorney-General, had been held responsible for the escape of the *Alabama* and the consequent troubles: for Atherton was the son of a Wesleyan minister, and these old gentlemen had known him as a boy and had watched his career with pride. I heard this tragedy used to illustrate Solon's saying, "Call no man happy till his death."

All these things were talked over again when, in the seventies, the "Jubilee Singers" visited England. These exquisite vocalists, crooning their simple negro hymns and songs, were listened to by thousands with admiration and the keenest interest. Most of them had been slaves; and it was impossible for a child to hear his parents talking of them, or singing the songs, without learning something of the Civil War and its causes, and of Lincoln and the Emancipation. That these people, only a few years before without souls or bodies of their own, should now be members of a University and free to travel as they pleased, was one of the miracles of the time.

Though of such world-wide importance, it was indeed a civil war. It was one in which, as Ambrose Bierce well knew, a father might be on one side and a son on the other. A wife might be for the South and her husband for the North. This, of course, was

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well known to me in theory, but it was brought vividly home to me when I met a lady whose father's farm was on the very battlefield of Bull Run, exactly "between the pass and fell incensed points of mighty opposites"—as we know, always a dangerous position. But in this case it was even more dangerous than usual; for the father was Federal and the mother a Confederate. Again and again she was suspected, with some justice, of assisting the Southern cause; and repeatedly the house was searched for spies. On one occasion a small Federal search-party arrived. "No one here," she said. "As a matter of form," they answered, "we must look round." They took a perfunctory glance, and declared themselves satisfied. "No," she said, "as you wouldn't take my word for it, you must go *everywhere*"; and guided them to a shed; having got them in, she locked the door. At this moment, fortunately, her husband arrived and released them; but it took him some time before he could soothe them down. It may easily be imagined that the children, seeing their parents thus divided, took sides themselves.

But of all these prenatal memories, perhaps the most distinct are those of Palmerston's last years, the calm before the storm. No city since ancient Athens was more politically-minded than Birmingham as I knew it. The "caucus" was then in full vigour, "mewing its mighty youth"; and the city, not without good reason, regarded itself as the metropolis of British Radicalism. The very errand-boys

were politicians, and could talk learnedly about plumping and "Three Acres and a Cow." Political meetings were frequent and always crowded: indeed on more than one occasion, though I had the assistance of an elder brother who was a Rugby forward, I failed to get in. What was my astonishment, therefore, when an older friend told me that, in Palmerston's time, he had heard even Bright speak to half-empty houses! "We had decided," said this determined Radical, "to let the old horse pull the coach at his own pace; but when he should go, then——" They did let the old horse pull, or rather stand still; but no sooner had Palmerston died than there came a rush of reform unparalleled in our history, and in that rush Birmingham bore its full share.

In my time Palmerston was a legend, as in fact he had been in his life. Men told tales, canonical or apocryphal, of his sets-to with Mr. Rowcliffe, the butcher, at Tiverton elections, of the cheerful way in which he acknowledged that Rowcliffe had "downed" him in repartee, or of the pride with which he scored a victory over his renowned antagonist. "Lucky for me you're not in Parliament, Mr. Rowcliffe," he would say, or "Had you there, I fancy." All knew how the inhabitants of Rugeley, annoyed by its sinister fame as the abode of Dr. Palmer, asked the Prime Minister to change its name; and how he replied, "Call it Palmerston." Perhaps the greatest orator of the sixties, not excepting Gladstone and Bright, was the Methodist

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minister, Dr. Morley Punshon, who, though now, by the common fate of great speakers, almost utterly forgotten, was a stupendous power in his own generation. His lectures, possibly even more than his sermons, attracted enormous audiences both in England and in America. Lord Shaftesbury, as a devout Evangelical, was naturally in sympathy with the Methodists, and more than once took the chair at Dr. Punshon's lectures. He used to say that they represented the greatest height to which human voice and action could conceivably reach.<sup>1</sup>

Shaftesbury was a Tory. It occurred to somebody, who little knew how totally Palmerston's religious views—if such they could be called—differed from Shaftesbury's, to request the "Liberal" leader to redress the balance by taking the chair at one of

<sup>1</sup> As a boy, I repeatedly heard Dr. Punshon, both as lecturer and as preacher, in his later years: and certainly it is hard to imagine that Demosthenes himself could have been more effective. He tried the most daring flights, and never faltered, for tone and gesture were always *exactly* right. Every word was given its due emphasis, and carried its proper weight. Sudden pauses, the rapid rush of sentences and their retardation, the whisper and the crescendo, were all studied, but the art concealed the art. Unfortunately, he had his *servum pecus* of imitators, who *just* missed, and therefore utterly failed. When people say that the grand style of eloquence is discredited, they are thinking of these mimics. Were another Punshon to arise, with the same amazing genius, he would, I think, succeed even to-day, like his predecessor; but till he *does* arise, it is as well to keep to the present conversational and restrained style.

Every gesture, word, and tone being thus carefully prepared, Punshon wore himself out, and died comparatively young. I have been told that this preparation worked against him as an extempore speaker, and that as a debater he was unsuccessful.

Incidentally, it may be worth mentioning that when, just after Macaulay's death, Punshon was preparing a lecture on him (which turned out to be his most miraculous triumph), Shaftesbury, who was to take the chair, wrote to him saying, "Do not omit to notice Macaulay's *negativism* in religious matters." It was not then known that Macaulay was what would now be called an agnostic; but his reticence had been observed, and his dislike of Exeter Hall had been openly expressed. Punshon followed the advice.

these lectures. Palmerston had never heard of the lecturer. "What is he called?" said he. "Punshon." "What a rum name!" he replied; and the negotiations went no further.

It was this humour, and a remarkable good-temper and placability, that made even Radicals like Rowcliffe forgive his obstructiveness and bellicosity. When Garibaldi, the idol of the Liberals, came to England, some members of the Government were anxious as to the effect of the reception of this firebrand on foreign affairs. "What shall we do with him?" asked a Cabinet Minister. "Do?" said Palmerston: "we'll marry him to Miss Coutts, and get Gladstone to explain her away." It was felt, also, that though essentially a Tory, he was a Tory democrat. "Why do you always travel third-class?" said someone to him. "Because there isn't a fourth," was the reply. Such sayings were passed from mouth to mouth, and conquered prejudice, even in a generation too young to have known him. At my school there was a special prize for history, and the subject for an essay was Palmerston. A boy who knew nothing of him but what his father had told him wrote pages of enthusiastic and anecdotic eloquence on the congenial theme: and this essay helped him to gain the prize.

As the mists of memory dissolve into light, I see more and more distinctly one great figure. With hardly an exception, for I lived successively in a number of the large towns of the Midlands and the

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North, the men I met were Liberals or Radicals, inspired by a passionate devotion to Gladstone, who was, indeed, thought of as scarcely human. Speakers in public meetings, when gravelled for lack of ideas, could always gain a respite by simply uttering that spell-like name; cheers invariably followed, and the stutterer had time to consult his notes or to rack his small store of brains. The admiration of wiser men was more rational, but it was equally intense. Curiously enough, it was stronger in Nonconformist circles than anywhere else, though I often heard ministers wonder that so great a man could cherish such strange High Church illusions. It was, however, allowed, nay insisted, that he was absolutely sincere and a true Christian. Dissenters in whose houses he had stayed told of his simple piety. A lecture on "Statesmen I have known," was delivered in a Northern chapel by Dr. Guinness Rogers, a distinguished Nonconformist minister, who had known scores of these worthies. There were many light touches and plenty of humour in the accounts given of lesser men; but when the Doctor came to his real hero he lowered his tones to an almost reverential whisper, and described how Mr. Gladstone when staying with him joined in the family prayers, extempore though they were, and how he preferred religious talk to any other kind. Gladstone was, despite his Anglicanism, a converted man. All this was the more remarkable as it was not so long since the Dissenters had felt themselves betrayed by the

Education Bill of 1870. The great scene was fresh in their minds when the attack of Edward Miall, editor of the *Nonconformist*, on the Bill, had drawn from Gladstone the passionate exclamation, "If the honourable gentleman cannot give me his support, in God's name let him take it elsewhere." The challenge was accepted. Miall, in the *Nonconformist*, Chamberlain in a famous review article, George Dixon and R. W. Dale in letters or speeches, told Nonconformists that open enemies were better than deceitful friends. Dissenting support *was* withdrawn, and the result was the Liberal defeat of 1874.

But, by the time when I was able to take notice, this was, if not forgotten, forgiven. Gladstone was once more a king, enjoying his own again. Partially, no doubt, this restoration was due to the loathing which Disraeli inspired. A common hatred, as is well known, is one of the surest bonds of friendship: and, if I remember aright, hatred of Disraeli and all his works was one of the most certain marks of sound Radicalism. If not Belial himself, he was Belial's eldest son; and the children of Liberal households were trained to detest him as Nelson's middies were trained to detest Napoleon. It was the firm belief of such households that the "melancholy harlequin"<sup>1</sup> was a Faust who had sold himself to Mephistopheles. No one doubted that he was deliberately planning another Crimean War on behalf of the unspeakable Turk. One of his rare

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's nickname for Disraeli.

rash sentences lent colour to the belief: without waiting to inquire, he called the revelations as to the Bulgarian atrocities "coffee-house babble." His organ, the *Standard*, declared they were invented by the *Daily News* to fill up the gap left by an exciting murder-mystery, the Bravo case.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the stories were not only true, but less than the truth. And when Gladstone came out with his terrific bag-and-baggage pamphlets, the whole Nonconformist world condoned the Education Act, and was ready to follow him through fire and through water.

'Do you think there will be war?' said an anxious Dissenter to his minister when the Fleet was ordered to Besika Bay.

"Not if there is a God in Heaven," was the reply. "And the voice of the nation will soon be heard, rebuking the Satanic iniquity. In *this* case, at any rate, *vox populi* is *vox Dei*."

Whether Disraeli wished for war or not, it was avoided; but all true Dissenters ascribed the escape, "under God," to Mr. Gladstone. Satan, and the newly invented idol Jingo, had been overthrown, and Gladstone was the divinely-appointed Macca-bæus.

Then followed the ever-memorable Midlothian campaign—an orgy of reckless rhetoric, according to Lord Salisbury, a prophetic Isaiah-like denunciation, according to the Liberals. The railway-journey northwards was like a triumphal procession,

<sup>1</sup> I refer to this case later.



without the warning slave to whisper the word Nemesis. At every stopping-place the prophet addressed a crowd and thundered against the crimes in high places; and at every one of these towns, at the following election, the Tory member was rejected and a Liberal returned. Nearly twenty years after, when the hero had died, a Radical devotee recalled these scenes, and celebrated them in verse :

*And then besides, who received such ovations  
In passing through the railway-stations ?*

Then came the actual Midlothian speeches, rousing enthusiasm to absolute frenzy. Babies were taken to the meetings in order that, if they survived the crush, they might tell their grandchildren they had seen Mr. Gladstone. The audience, says Demosthenes somewhere, makes the oration. At any rate, it raised even this orator to greater heights than he ever reached before or since. "I have heard," said one who was present, "all the famous speakers of my time; but if I had not heard the Midlothian speeches I should not have had the faintest conception of what can be achieved by the human voice."

Every word of these philippics (for philippics they were, aimed at one man, whom Gladstone regarded as Cicero regarded Antony) was reported in the papers; and every word was devoured by the boyish bands of enthusiasts at my school. "What a Radical Gladdy's getting," cried one of them as

he read out a purple passage. The millennium was coming; Belial would be cast, if not into the lake of fire, into the outer darkness of Opposition, and righteousness would reign once more.

Alas, though Belial *was* cast out, the glory departed early. There was a pæan of triumph in the *Alliance News*, the organ of the Teetotallers, over the discomfiture of so many brewers. After all these years I still remember a few of the lines :

*Noble Wheelhouse has fallen, Sir Gilbert is slain,  
Three Allsopps lie stretched stiff and stark on the plain :  
Alas for the city to liquordom dear,  
The green spot of old England well-watered with beer ;  
A Bass has been chucked in his own native city,  
And Hall has at Oxford been vanquished by Chitty ;*

but it was soon clear that nothing was going to be done for "Temperance": there was too much to do besides. Disraeli accepted his defeat like a man; but he called for a map, and laying his finger on Ireland said: "There lies the fate that will bring down the Liberals." He was uncannily right.

One result of this devotion to Gladstone was specially noteworthy. Rumours of the discourtesy with which the Queen treated him spread abroad, and were confirmed when she went so far as to send an open telegram censuring him for the Gordon fiasco in the Soudan. It was said, and it was true, that she had allowed him, at eighty and more, to stand in her presence for two hours, whereas she had insisted that the man of Belial should sit,

though considerably younger.<sup>1</sup> This roused among the younger Radicals an intense feeling of disgust, which seemed to the older men a revival of the Republican sentiment of the sixties. They discouraged it strongly, though they admitted that the provocation was great. "You must be loyal," they used to say; but the answer was always, "We will be loyal, if she will be constitutional and decently polite." Gladstone himself never failed to deprecate this hostility; and it was a common saying that the Queen little knew how strong a bulwark of her throne was the man whom she was persecuting. At the same time, it was known that the Prince of Wales never failed to treat Gladstone with friendly courtesy; and this stood him in good stead later, when certain habits and actions of his pained the Nonconformist conscience. It was felt that, after all, the "root of the matter was found in him"; a man who admired Gladstone must, despite appearances, be sound at heart. There was a similar half-liking for Randolph Churchill. Amid all his violent public attacks on the Grand Old Man, it was more than suspected that he cherished a private admiration.<sup>2</sup> I believe that, even before the semi-Radicalism of Randolph was perceived, few Radicals were without a sneaking affection for

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, admitted to the presence, took charge of affairs himself. After standing till he was exhausted, he said, "Your Majesty, I am an old man; with your permission I will sit down": and did so.

<sup>2</sup> This was once compared in my hearing to the reverence which Byron owned he felt for Wordsworth—but which did not hinder him from enlivening *Don Juan* with sarcasms on the "drowsy frowsy poem called 'The Excursion.'"

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him; and there were none who did not realise the "tears of things" when his tragic fate overtook him.

Second, if second, to Gladstone, was John Bright: in fact, for a long time in the generation before my own, the two names were constantly conjoined. There were men who, far into the eighties, spoke of the great ministry of 1868-1874 as "the Gladstone and Bright ministry." But Bright was more easily understood. He was, to begin with, a Quaker, and his piety, which was never doubted, was simple like his creed. His character also was simple, and his career consistent. There was nothing in him of that subtlety which Gladstone's enemies called sophistry; nor had he ever been a rising hope of the Tories. When he took office, no one questioned his motives, and when he resigned, everybody knew why. Thus when, in 1882, he refused to countenance the bombardment of Alexandria, the most Jingo advocate of war respected him.

By my time he had almost entirely laid aside the pugnacity which made people say that if he had not been a Quaker he would have been a prize-fighter. He did, it is true, attack the House of Lords; but it was in a tone which their lordships themselves could almost enjoy. They were, he said, quoting from an author of whom perhaps they had never heard, "not in trouble like other men, neither were they plagued like other men: therefore pride is as a chain about their neck, violence covereth them as a

garment; they have more than heart could wish." This was milder than his retort, years before, to a noble lord who had said, "Providence, noting the wickedness of Mr. Bright, had seen fit to punish him with a disease of the brain." "That was a punishment," replied Bright, "with which *even Providence* could not visit the noble lord."

When I heard him speak, I was astonished. His manner was altogether different from what I had expected. I had been told that he was an orator whose flashes of eloquence dazzled like lightning: and I imagined I was about to hear another Dr. Punshon. Nothing of the kind. He was absolutely quiet and restrained; indeed for the first minute or two I thought he might break down. There was no "action" or gesture. He toyed with his eyeglass, and seemed as if he were spelling out from it words that were difficult to read. It was some little while before I noticed that the words came, that they were the right words, and that, quietly as they were spoken, every one of them could be heard in the farthest parts of the great building. After a time I never thought either of the words or of the delivery; I listened to what he was saying, and so did everyone else in the vast audience. Not till later did I realise that after all this had been oratory of the highest kind; it had been gently and lucidly persuasive, and had insinuated into our minds, without the slightest violence, what he meant to convey. He was in deadly earnest, and desired to convince: his message was more to him than the way he put



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it. But at the same time the absolute appropriateness of the simple language, the finish of the sentences, and the perfect balance of the hour-long speech, compelled attention, though, while he was speaking, one forgot to observe it. It was one of the most wonderful examples I ever saw of the art which hides itself. I think it hid itself even from Bright; it was the result of a life-time of practice, and the overflow of a full and noble mind.

If there was any conscious art, I think it showed itself in that hesitation at the beginning. Bright would have agreed with Antony that, at least in dealing with a British audience, the great orator poses as not being one; he leaves patent eloquence to the Brutuses. There should be no suspicion that he was about to beguile us with tricks of rhetoric: he was, in plain and stuttering fashion, going to put before us a few important points which he was afraid we were too likely to forget. When this end was attained, he allowed himself fluency and ease of utterance; but he eschewed, throughout, anything which might remind us that he was an orator after all.

I might almost say that he would have been, in effect, almost an orator if he had never opened his mouth; for his mere appearance, in those days, was enough to excite reverence in the most cynical. His face, his presence, and his demeanour were, without exception, the most impressive I have ever seen on a public platform, and would have given dignity to nonsense and substance to platitude.



## AS I REMEMBER

Among the memories I have recorded in these notes, I regard this as one of the most permanent and the most valued.

To provide the curtain-raiser for this great drama the authorities had invited Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Northern landowner and baronet, but a Radical of the Radicals, and the most prominent advocate of "Temperance"—that is, of Local Option—in the country. He was one of the most witty of public speakers, good-humoured despite the constant rebuffs his crusade met with, and popular both with supporters and with opponents. He is now, I suppose, nearly totally forgotten; but he was then a power in the land, and a certain "draw." Innumerable stories were told of him and by him, more especially concerning the provincial magnates who were induced to take the chair at his meetings. One of these gentry, to show his respect for his guest, introduced him as the "Rev. Sir Wilfrid": which surprised the audience, for anyone less clerical, either in dress or in manner, than this country squire, could hardly be imagined. Another began his chairman's speech with the words, "A misogynist is a woman-hater; I don't know whether Sir Wilfrid is a misogynist or not, but I do know he is a beerogynist."

On this occasion Sir Wilfrid, who knew what was required of him, was cheery, vigorous, and brief. It was rarely, he said, that he agreed even with Mr. Bright. Radicals scarcely ever did agree. They left agreement to the Tories; for it was a simple matter

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to secure harmony among people who never thought at all. But when he found Mr. Bright and himself in harmony, he was pretty sure that he was right. And he was sure that Mr. Bright would agree with him on one point. This was a large, enthusiastic, and soundly Radical Birmingham audience, and they were going to have a good time. All this was said in so breezy and jovial a fashion that it seemed witty even when it was not; and it certainly put the crowd into a good humour.

I left Birmingham in 1885 a "soundly Radical" city. I returned on a visit in 1886, and found it utterly changed. The very people who had cheered the mere name of Gladstone before, now could not mention it without reprobation and fury. I have seen political bitterness repeatedly in my time, but never anything approaching the hatreds of the early Home Rule period. Schnadhorst, once the presiding genius of the caucus, the organiser of Liberal victory, and the idol of his party, had taken the Gladstonian side; he was now an outcast and a publican. A few Town Councillors professed the same creed: they were ruthlessly turned out of their seats, and never received civic honours again: they had to console themselves with the hope of knighthoods or similar decorations if the Liberals should ever regain office; and some of them had to wait twenty years for this poor consolation, while they saw men becoming Lord Mayors or Aldermen whom they had hitherto never thought of as possible rivals. It must be owned that they

made up for their disappointments by the ferocity with which, in private, they denounced the Chamberlain régime. There was no quarter in that war: on both sides there was a frenzied antagonism, which split families into factions, and dissolved the closest friendships. Conversing with a Gladstonian friend of mine, I happened to mention a man with whom he had been intimate, and whose candidature for a seat in Parliament he had warmly supported. "Don't talk of that scoundrel," he said through his clenched teeth. Other former friends of his spoke of *him* in exactly the same style. Whether Home Rule was a Christian policy or not, it had at any rate one Christian feature: it came to bring not peace but a sword. If you wanted tranquillity, your only safe plan was that of Mr. Pickwick, to shout with the mob, and if there were two mobs, to shout with the larger. In Birmingham, therefore, if you were prudent, you generally shouted with Chamberlain.

All this was a great tribute to the enormous influence of Chamberlain in the town for which he had done so much. He might, indeed, have almost taken to himself the words used of Augustus and Rome; he had found it brick and made it marble; and there can be no doubt that many people followed him out of sheer gratitude for his immense services. I think, however, that he might have failed but for the moral support given him by two men whose prestige was almost, if not quite, as great as his own. These were Bright and

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R. W. Dale, the great Congregationalist minister. Bright, after much natural hesitation, threw all his weight against the Home Rule Bill; and it was unquestionably his decision which drew the waverers over to the opposing side, and made up more than the majority of thirty by which it was defeated.<sup>1</sup> Had he even remained neutral, the subsequent history might have been different.

R. W. Dale, whom I often heard, was indeed a power in Birmingham and elsewhere. His preaching, plain, direct, and calm, was singularly impressive and full of substance. I doubt if he could have uttered a platitude if he had tried. Although his sermons were always based on sound knowledge, and were intended to teach as well as to move, the attention of his congregation never wandered; he reminded one of the saying of Jonson about Bacon, "No man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss." Few there were who risked that loss. I remember contriving, by an effort, to "look aside" and watch the people instead of the minister. I was the only one not concentrated on him.

In this fashion, by service of this kind kept up during thirty years, Dale had built up a reputation,

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone's great speech nearly won the cause in the Commons, and if the vote had been taken immediately after it would have carried it. It was a marvellous effort. A lady, the daughter of an Irish M.P., told me she had received a ticket for that evening. The ticket was useless; the Strangers' Gallery was crowded out, and so was the Lobby. She stood therefore out of doors, and heard every word perfectly distinctly from beginning to end.

and gained an influence, almost unsurpassed, not only in Birmingham but in the country; and his admirable writings, which overpassed denominational bounds, made him known in Scotland and America as well as in England. He commanded universal respect; an Archbishop might envy him his position.<sup>1</sup> Alike in politics and in religion he stood in the forefront. He was, of course, a Liberal. Home Rule came; he avoided provocative words, and took no active part in the agitation; but it was known that he was opposed to it, and his silence was as effective as most men's speech.

Despite the glory which Chamberlain subsequently achieved, I cannot help thinking his career somewhat of a tragedy. I have spoken above of a meeting to which I failed to gain admission. That was the meeting in which he expounded his famous "Unauthorised Programme"; and I still remember the pulsating enthusiasm with which we boy-Liberals read it the next day. Here were reforms indeed! Something great was about to be done, and Jerusalem would be built in England. When, in the appointed time, the Grand Old Man should be gathered to his fathers, here was his worthy successor. One felt like the young men at the dawn of the French Revolution.

It all came to nothing. The "leader" was "lost": he went over to the reactionaries, and scarcely one of the reforms he had promised was

<sup>1</sup> He was, as will be remembered, a close friend of Bishop Gore, highest of High Churchmen.

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realised. It has been said, and I think truly, that he was never comfortable with his new friends: he was still a Radical at heart: but he was dragged along down the slippery slope of Imperialism, and at last sank in the slough of the Boer War. During twenty years Liberalism languished, and the man who might have given it vitality was the chief agent in its depression.

It is not easy to describe the growing sense of disappointment and disillusion that came over those to whom Liberalism was a vital creed, as the years went by and the great cause remained in the shade. In the eighties there was a passionate desire for social amelioration. Charles Booth's monumental *Survey of London* was appearing, and men were learning how many millions were existing on the very verge of starvation. This was accompanied by the once famous book *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, and by General Booth's *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. There was a widespread feeling that this misery ought not to be, and that it could be prevented. Numbers of brilliant young men from the Universities, with the brightest prospects before them, determined to devote their lives to the work. One of the most extraordinary lecturers ever seen in Oxford, only a few years older than his enthusiastic pupils, Arnold Toynbee, was the leading spirit. His lectures on history and economics, in defiance of academic tradition, were sermons like those of Pope Urban or St. Bernard preaching a crusade. For a time he broke down

even the fashionable Oxford pose of pococurantism and indifference. I well remember how, in the Oxford Union of all places, Hudson Shaw, speaking on the "Bitter Cry," suddenly threw aside the conventional "highbrow" attitude, and burst into an appeal to "his brothers of Oxford" to cast away their accursed cynicism and remember their duties to their less fortunate fellows: and for a time they did so. It was then not usual to cheer a speech in the Union except for a "score" or a pointed epigram; but every sentence of Shaw's peroration, which was addressed not to the head but to the heart, was cheered to the echo: and, what was more important, the speech was not laughed at the next morning. Consonant as it was with the prevailing feeling, it was followed by action. That was the time when Toynbee Hall—such a monument as Toynbee would himself have chosen—and school and college missions began to be founded for work in the most necessitous parts of the great cities. For a short while, there was no lack of workers—the harvest was seen to be plenteous, and the labourers were many. Here was something in which men of all views could combine: doubters like "Robert Elsmere," utter atheists, High Churchmen, Dissenters. Men who had lost their way to the pulpit found their way to the slum; and others took the slum on the passage to the Church. Neither Barnett nor any of his coadjutors had any difficulty in finding helpers.

Then, by one of those unaccountable changes of

feeling of which history is full, a wave of "Imperialism" inundated the land, and spread from the highest to the lowest. A friend of mine overheard two road-menders talking together—"We have an Empire, you know," the idea being that they had someone to lord it over: and you could hear the same thing, in more polysyllabic language, everywhere. There was magic in the word, which had about it all the fatal associations of war and conquest it had borne in the days of Cæsar and Napoleon. It was useless to point out that there was nothing imperial about our relations with the colonies, and that even India had been conquered for us by Indian troops. "What we have we will hold, and what we have not we will take" was a phrase on many lips. The future lay with the so-called Anglo-Saxons. An alliance with Germany would make the domination secure; and if France opposed, she must be rolled in blood and mud.

This feeling culminated in the Jubilee of 1897, which was a corroboree in adoration of the great god Jingo. The chief priest was Kipling, whose tales and poems were glorification of the soldier, intermixed with exhortations to "give hell" to those who, like the wicked animal, had the impudence to defend themselves when attacked. At the same time, it is true, the high-priest did not disdain to play the part of warning prophet. No sooner was the frantic revel over than he urged us not to forget the God in whose service and by whose help these conquests had been won. But that



he spoke in English, and spoke of God instead of Allah, he might have been a Mohammedan imam crying to the true believers to go forth and offer the infidel the choice between the Koran and death. It was useless for another poet to point out that most of the conquests had been made "when we forgot," or for others to remark that "the lesser breeds without the law" were hardly likely to accept the Bible from the conqueror's left hand when they saw the sword in the right. We were the Chosen People, the "lesser breeds" were, if not Amalekites to be slaughtered, yet Gibeonites to be our hewers of wood and drawers of water: and they ought to jump at the privilege.

The effect at home was what might have been expected. The eyes of the Imperialist, like the fool's, were at the ends of the earth; and Little England was too small and too near for him. Volunteers for social service became fewer and fewer; and the Warden of one Mission, himself an Imperialist, owned sadly that Imperialism made it hard for him to secure cultured helpers. Milner, who had been a devoted friend of Arnold Toynbee, and whose memoir of Toynbee's life was singularly beautiful and impressive, went forth to be a missionary of Empire; and younger men, who wished to do good in the world, followed, in their smaller measure, Milner's example.

It is hard to describe the bewilderment and helplessness of those who stood apart from the movement. For an adequate account of it one would

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have to borrow the words of Burke, when, with all the futile force of his matchless eloquence, he was contending against the policy which was rousing America to rebellion. "Is it possible," asked Fox at a later time, "for a whole nation to go mad?" And Fox at last retired from the useless attempt to teach sanity to a raving people. So in the Imperialistic days, those who did not share the mania gave up the hopeless struggle. "In the land of peace they had been wearied; and in the swelling of Jordan they could do nothing." Some courageous men raised their voices in protest; they were either howled down or, worse, ignored.

The inevitable result soon came. A people in this mood was ripe for war, more especially when Mammon added his persuasiveness to the call of Jingo: and few paused to reflect when war seemed likely with a nation which must, it was thought, be an easy prey. For the opponents of that war there was no resource but silence. Those who remember the strength of the feeling against "conscientious objectors" in the Great War may, by vigorous use of the multiplication table, form some slight idea of the obloquy which overwhelmed those who were indiscriminately dubbed "pro-Boers"—a nickname applied alike to those who thought the war iniquitous and to those who pleaded that prisoners should be treated with consideration. I have heard men say that every one taken with arms in his hands should be shot.

Fortunately, the country was speedily undeceived.

Those who would take what they had not, found that it was not so easy even to keep what they had : and the war, which was to have been a picnic (indeed some officers took their pianos about with them to provide amusement for their leisure hours), proved to be a very stern business lasting three years instead of the promised six weeks. Chamberlain, indeed, still boasted that it was a feather in his cap ; but to most people the feather seemed a sadly bedraggled ornament. If this was Imperialism, it was a more expensive thing than they had bargained for. The great enthusiasm began to subside, and those who had despaired began to hope. The last flicker of the old flame was the orgy of Mafeking night, which recalled, by its very violence, how terrible had been the fear that the war, so lightly entered upon, might turn out a disaster.

And, as I have hinted, it soon appeared that, though Jingo might still be gloating, Mammon was ceasing to be zealous in the business. The cost mounted up to hundreds of millions : the poor man's beer and tobacco began to cost him more : was it worth it ? John Morley had warned people that the tax-gatherer was the great teacher of pacifism : and they were finding that Morley was right. It began even to be doubted whether the Boers, who could fight so well, were after all a " lesser breed " : and if so, might there not be some mistake in the idea that the Briton was so obviously superior to everyone else ? For the greatness of a nation can be best measured by the number of pounds it costs

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to conquer it: and the Boers were causing a vast amount of trouble to the Treasury.

Even before this, and perhaps in some minds from the very beginning, there was, I think, a sense that an Imperialism which had been represented as so noble was hardly showing itself at its best in a war between a nation of many millions and one of a few hundred thousands. Some, probably, resembled the man who wished for the marriage between Edward VI and Mary Queen of Scots: he "misliked not the match, but did not approve of wooing by arms and bloodshed." The Union of South Africa was desirable, but apostolic blows and knocks were hardly the right way to bring it about.

Much of the fury against the "pro-Boer," in fact, I think was due to an uneasy subconscious suspicion that England was in the wrong; it was like the stubborn denials of a criminal who hopes to persuade himself of his innocence by crying "Not guilty" a thousand times. "Having unto truth, by telling of it, made a sinner of his memory, he credits his own lie"; but there remains below the surface the sense that it is a lie after all, and therefore he must continue vociferating, and abusing those whose conduct rebukes him. At length, however, repentance had its way; and when, ten years later, General Smuts came over and told the nation that it had been utterly wrong, it took the charge without a murmur.

But what I wish to emphasise is that the Imperialistic phase was but a phase. It lasted but a short

time; and the whole Victorian age is no more to be judged by it than by the similar mania at the Crimean period, of which so strange a memorial is to be found in Tennyson's *Maud*. And, though it is a curious method of driving out the devil of industrialism to get others to fight while the industrialist stays at home, yet there is no doubt that, in a confused way, both in 1854 and in 1899, people had a fancy that the nation was being corrupted by wealth, and needed to be cleansed by blood. The Victorians, in truth, were a little ashamed of their Victorian immersion in trade. So far, then, from uncompromisingly censuring them, we ought to recognise that they at times were capable of censuring themselves.

It is unfortunate that the latest years of Victorianism were precisely those in which this national self-complacency showed itself at its worst; for naturally these years are those most easily remembered by the next generation. To me the characteristics then apparent seem rather lapses or vagaries than permanent features of the Victorians. A wide view of a longer period will probably give impartial judges a brighter conception of the age.

By way of appendix to this chapter on Politics a few words may be hazarded on that portentous phenomenon "the Nonconformist Conscience." As Nonconformity was the backbone of Liberalism, and as such causes as Temperance, Disestablishment, the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and others of the kind, were largely though by

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no means exclusively promoted by Nonconformists, the phrase was constantly employed by the opposite party as a synonym for unctuous self-righteousness. The Nonconformists were accused of having conscientious scruples about the vices of others, while hugging their own. Like the old Puritans, they "compounded for sins they were inclined to by damning those they had no mind to." They appeared to their enemies as claiming a monopoly of morals, and of bringing religion into all sorts of political questions with which it had nothing to do. Their ministers were said to use the pulpit as a political platform, and to make piety the handmaid of party.

There was, I think, something in the accusation, though, in my judgment, it is necessary to discriminate. In early days, for example, the Methodists were blamed by Dissenters (among whom they refused to count themselves) as not being political enough. Those who know the story of the Reform agitation of the twenties and thirties will remember the disgust of men like Bamford and Abel Heywood at this indifference. When the Methodists were urged to add their enormous strength to the movement—and had they done so the Reform Bill might have been passed ten years earlier—they replied that there was no need to worry about distress in this life: all would be made up for in the next. Similarly, they refused to assist the Chartists; one minister, Joseph Stephens, was actually expelled for speaking on a Chartist platform. Later, when the

main body had become Radical, they still abstained from public action. Many ministers never voted; and I never heard, or heard of, a definitely political sermon in a Methodist pulpit. In the other Non-conforming churches things were different; and indeed it is hard to blame the preachers, for politics, from the days of Plato down, have been held to be indistinguishable from ethics. If you hold a certain course of political action to be morally wrong, or contrary to Christianity, it is cowardice not to say so. That some preachers said so in an annoying, and perhaps conceited manner, is only what one would expect of human nature. But their opponents were naturally irritated; the feeling was like that of a Tory to-day, when a Labour pacifist seems to claim to be the only lover of peace in the country.

Unfortunately, the form of immorality most commonly attacked by the Nonconformists was the very one to which Christ was most merciful. A demand arose that politicians should be "moral"—and this obviously means, in practice, should not be found out. In two cases, at least, this insistence brought disaster to the very cause which the censors had at heart. The guilt of Sir Charles Dilke was never proved, and certainly he was given no chance, despite his strenuous efforts, of disproving the charges. None the less, one of the ablest of all Liberals was hounded out of Parliament by well-meaning Liberals. The case of Parnell was even more fatal. There is little doubt that, but for this scandal, the election of 1892 would have given

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Home Rule an enormous, and indeed a crushing, majority. Parnell's fault was one of the most venial of the class to which it belongs;<sup>1</sup> but the Nonconformists—here it is true supported by the Catholic priests—insisted on his resignation. Hence a split which postponed Home Rule for thirty years; and it was Home Rulers that caused it. When Home Rule did come, it was not the sort of Home Rule they had desired. All this was due to a conscience too sensitive to the sins of other people.

It is only fair, however, to say that many of the best men disliked the whole agitation. It was not their business to judge, they said. Some saintly persons, as hostile to sin as any of those who denounced it so freely, told me that the judgment ought to have been left to a Higher Power; that Dilke should have been held innocent till he was proved guilty, and that Parnell's punishment was out of all proportion to the offence.

Since then, while there has been, I think, a considerable improvement in political morality, "conscience" of this particular kind has been less assertive. It has proved to be too dangerous a luxury.

<sup>1</sup> Much capital was made out of a fire-escape incident. Parnell was said to have fled from discovery by this means, and the music-halls did not "slip the occasion." There was no truth in the story.



## CHAPTER VI

### BUSINESS

I HAVE ALREADY SAID a little about the Victorian business man as I knew him, but I think it not undesirable to say a little more. For business was the very warp and woof of Victorian life. As well attempt to describe the America of 1900 without mentioning the Babbitts or Chicago "Self-made Merchants" as describe the England of the eighties without enlarging on the corresponding class in our country. It was the sight of this class that led Arnold Toynbee to invent the phrase, "The Industrial Revolution"; for nothing short of a geological upheaval could have substituted for the Palæolithic man of Walpole's time the Neolithic of ours. In place of a country that could export food and yet have enough to live on, there had arisen one which every year had to import more food, and to pay for it by manufactures.

Yet, short as was the time since the "Revolution" began, one would have thought that the world had never been anything but a business organisation. Countries that were not industrial were uncivilised, and existed only to provide England with customers. Industrialism was, by a feat of theological legerdemain, read into the Bible itself; and the very

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Patriarchs were thought of as men who bought in the cheapest market and sold in the dearest: Jacob, at any rate, might have been a pupil of Ricardo.

It was this "business" that Ruskin, Froude, and Carlyle never wearied of attacking. The shop, the factory, and the steam-engine were like the *petit-maitre* parson to Cowper,

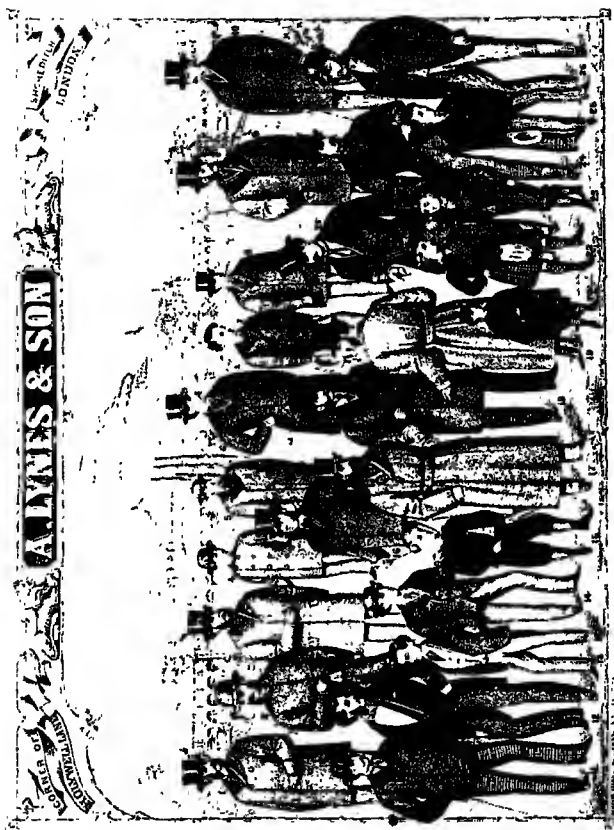
*their perfect scorn,  
Object of their implacable disgust.*

And I remember that when I was under their influence I was more than half inclined to agree with them. The art of getting rich, the taking of interest, the defacement of beauty-spots, these and a score of other Victorianisms were furiously assailed by these men, themselves Victorians; and so eloquently as only too easily to persuade one that England was a modern edition of Gomorrah, and doomed to a like fate. After a time, however, the spell lost its power. I noticed that, when denouncing merchandise, Ruskin boasted that his father was "an entirely honest merchant"; it was therefore possible to buy and sell and be honest. I noticed also that, while exhausting all his stores of vituperative prose on the steam-engine, Ruskin took the steamboat on his way to Italy. The same thing was true of Carlyle and Froude; they used all the resources which they hated merchandise for providing. Attacking wealth, they yet expected people to have enough spare money to purchase books and works of art. In fact, it was pretty plain that artists and

writers would find it hard to live unless there were in the country a fair supply of money: and the money was scarcely to be acquired without machinery and trade. Ruskin purposely made his books dear; for, he said, people should pay well for what was worth much. As I could not afford to buy them, and had to borrow them from a business man who could and did, I had my suspicions that there was more in trade than Ruskin admitted.

Thus, though I was for a time carried away by the rhetoric of *Unto this Last*, and though I still think it a most noble and inspiring book, I began to notice omissions and inconsistencies in the Ruskinian philosophy. When, later, I heard, as I often did, the new Isaiah prophesy, and saw him in bodily presence, I observed other contradictions in his teaching, which modified, though they could not destroy, my idolatry of him. One thing was very noticeable. He would utter an aphorism. You would reason on that with all the logical acumen you possessed, and draw from it the natural conclusion, which, it turned out, was a doctrine "entirely damnable." I found the same peculiarity in Carlyle. The two Major Prophets were not reasoners: they relied on feeling, and demanded an absolute submission of the intellect.

A book, now forgotten, to a great extent provided a corrective to the Chelsea and Coniston wisdom, and filled up its lacunæ. This was Philip Gilbert Hamerton's *Intellectual Life*. Hamerton was an artist, a scholar, and a man of sense. He pointed



MEN'S FASHIONS OF 1871



out that a certain measure of refinement is a *sine qua non* both for the student and for the artist, as well as for those who appreciate them; and that, unless there is considerably more than the bare necessities of life, such refinement is all but impossible. There is all the difference in the world between worshipping money for itself and taking pleasure in those amenities which money can supply. There is nothing to be ashamed of in going to a rich man's house and enjoying the artistic treasures which his wealth has enabled him to purchase. There is no need to despise poverty; you may recognise that a poor man may be morally your superior: but it is an equal mistake to despise the rich, to whom you owe a vast debt of intellectual and æsthetic delight. And, if you thus recognise the value of wealth in *some* cases, you must be prepared for cases of excess. If you want an Atticus you must put up with a Crassus, just as if you want a liberal Man of Ross you must put up with a miserly Sir John Cutler.

Cases of excess there, of course, were. I knew many purse-proud men who thought that the gifts of God could be purchased with money. "I don't consider you have delivered the goods," said a self-made Cræsus to a Head Master. "I paid you the price, and you have failed to get my boy into Cambridge." The Head Master did not say that no sum of money would buy diligence or talent. Another wealthy man was induced—how, I do not know—to subscribe for the foundation of

a preparatory school. Academically, the school was a success; but it did not pay interest. "Shameful," said Dives; "this is the first investment I have ever made which hasn't yielded a dividend."

But this is by no means the whole story. Not only were there, as we have seen, business men who contrived to be intellectual; there were some who, while content to leave learning and art to others, yet claimed, modestly but firmly, to be servants, and indispensable servants, of art and learning. They insisted that Hamerton was right. They were aware that without them the very people who despised them would be as helpless as an author without a compositor. Carlyle might complain that his books brought him "small recompense"; without the manufacturer and the tradesman the small recompense would have been none at all; and, they added, if money was worthless, why did he grumble because he could not get it? The musician, again, where would he be without purchasers of songs and guarantors of concerts? To despise *them* was as if the general should despise the purveyors of the sinews of war.

Business, in a word, was the life-blood of Great Britain, and the business man knew it. He walked about with "pride in his port" like his ancestor as pictured by Goldsmith; he was the Titan that bore up England, but he was not weary and he did not stagger under the load. Dim rumours might reach the Bradford wool manufacturer that, in the country districts, a man was considered somebody

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if he owned land; he listened with amused and sceptical contempt. Land, preferably land in Australia, was worth something as providing raw material for cloth, noils, and fents; otherwise it was nothing. The lord of wide acres which paid but two or three per cent was to him like a Highland chief who could not draw a cheque. I doubt if he would have felt much respect even for the famous Count Esterhazy, "who owned ten thousand shepherds," unless the Count could show that the shepherds might be turned into cash. If he heard of a country gentleman who had loaded himself with mortgages in order to *appear* as the owner of large tracts of land, the Bradford manufacturer would be speechless with superiority. A hundred pounds in the pocket were worth infinitely more than a thousand acres in imagination. You might borrow from the bank to enlarge your business, but to borrow in order to enlarge a phantom squiredom was stupidity *in excelsis*. This was forcibly brought home to me when I was very young, in two contrasted ways. A Midland business man mentioned in my hearing that he had just borrowed a hundred thousand pounds from the bank. Having been brought up with a horror of debt, I said, "How can you sleep at night when you owe all that?" He answered, "I couldn't sleep if I didn't owe it"; and then, in a pleasant and simple fashion, he explained how all great businesses were run on borrowed money, how, with this hundred thousand, he could more easily make fifteen per



cent than five without it, and how that fifteen per cent would still leave him eleven per cent when he had paid the bank the four per cent it demanded.

At almost exactly the same time another friend of mine, a farmer who, in order to be a country gentleman, had "bought" many hundred acres of land on mortgage, and had fallen behindhand regularly every year, was obliged to compound with the mortgagees. He lost the land he had bought, his original farm, and several thousand pounds besides. This was the sort of thing which moved my Midland friend to mingled pity and scorn. "Rather than fail like that," he said, "I would have put all my money into Consols, and lived on the interest."

The pride of the manufacturer was in something quite different. Nor was it always exactly in the possession of money as such, though money might be the external symbol of his state. It was borne in on me, when watching him, that it was, in its way, the pride of belonging to an aristocracy. Were you in the trade of the town? Were you "steel" in Sheffield, "hardware" in Birmingham, "cotton" in Manchester? *Then* you held your head high: you had the cachet of rank. If the geography-book said, "Such a town is famous for shipping" and you were *in* shipping, your position was like that of a feudal lord striding over a county. The attitude of the man in the town trade towards the lesser people was semi-feudal also. "I," he would think and sometimes say, "am

hardly in trade at all, except as a general is in the Army. The butchers, grocers, fruiterers of the town are the real tradesmen who supply my lower needs; I am the aristocrat to whom they kow-tow for my custom." In professional men, *if successful*, he might recognise semi-equals; but even with them he was *primus inter pares*; and the "tradesmen" had to know their place. He spoke of them as an Oxford don speaks, or used to speak, of "city-people"—as of an inferior class of sub-human beings. "My father's in the town business," a schoolgirl would say loftily to one whose father, though rich, belonged to a lower caste.

But with this, it must be remembered, there ran also a feeling which can be compared only with the *noblesse oblige* of the old aristocracy. I have known men who have combined the consciousness of being Napoleons in energy and organising power with the lofty sense of honour of a French noble of the *ancien régime*. They had a standard, and lived up to it—not entirely Pauline, but making them "fervent in spirit, and not slothful." Work was their ideal, "Six days shalt thou labour," their first commandment, and their tenth.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed hard, in the present leisurely and easy-going days, to realise the intensity and continuity of the toil to which Victorian business men cheerfully submitted themselves. They were at their desks on Mondays at nine, and stayed

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the schoolboy's "Six days shall thy neighbour labour, and do all thou hast to do; and the seventh day thou shalt rest."

there, with a brief interval for lunch, till six in the evening or later. On Saturdays they stopped regretfully at twelve; and, beyond perhaps a little croquet, the strenuous exercise of the sixties, or, in the eighties, a set or two of lawn-tennis, they strained their muscles hardly at all. Some, like Joseph Chamberlain, when feeling the need of relaxation, sought it not in "play," but in a specially strong cigar. Golf, the motor-car, and the week-end generally were unknown, and would have been despised if known. The evenings, as I have said above, were spent with the family.

As for the family holiday, now so common, and, like so many luxuries, regarded as a necessity, few men took holidays oftener than once in the year, and many not so often. I remember meeting a wealthy manufacturer on a June day in the eighties. "Where are you going for your holiday?" "Why, nowhere," he answered; "I went last year." He was by no means unique.

This devotion to business, which was marked in every one of the great towns I knew, may have been in part due to the practical certainty that it would pay; and it was perhaps too often accompanied by a somewhat haughty conviction that failure was a proof of laziness or incompetence.

Some very illuminating cases of this attitude might easily be given. One, in particular, is very clear in my memory. A Midland provision-dealer, who had made a comfortable living, but not that ten thousand a year which was necessary to secure

him the respect from his fellow-citizens which he thought his due, happened to obtain early information as to the possibility of a Franco-Prussian war. Here was his chance. If war came, provisions would be wanted, and, as we all have seen since, there would be a certain indifference on the part of purchasers as to price and quality. He made further inquiries, and discovered that war was not possible but probable. He would risk it. He borrowed right and left, purchased enormous stores, and hired vast warehouses for their accommodation. He stood to gain hugely or to lose hugely. Suddenly there came the news of Ollivier's declaration that the quarrel was at an end. This, if Ollivier was right, would it is true mean the sparing of thousands of lives, but that aspect of the question did not appeal to the gentleman. He, himself, was faced with utter and irretrievable ruin. His hair went white, and more quickly than that of the Prisoner of Chillon. He was a devout man, a regular churchgoer; and he prayed hard that the calamity might pass him by.<sup>1</sup> His prayer was, as all know, heard: Ollivier proved a false prophet. War was declared, and the speculator made a clear gain of two hundred thousand pounds.

He was indeed a remarkable man; for, unlike every other gambler I have known, he gambled this once, and no more: he never tempted fortune

<sup>1</sup> Prayer was often used as a business instrument, not always successfully. A man I knew, a shipbroker, conducted his operations on the principle of insuring ships which Lloyds refused to touch, and praying for their safety. Lloyds, I heard, gave him two years of solvency. He held out for five.

again. The fearful anxiety of one week had entered into his soul. No sooner had the transaction been finished than he sold his business and retired into private life. But what struck me most, in my conversations with him, was not so much his conviction that God had mercifully allowed the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Germans and Frenchmen in order to save *him* from bankruptcy, but the quiet and assured fashion in which he would censure men for failing, merely because they had failed. Failure was in itself a sin.

None the less, it was oftener a sin then than now. As a rule, care and capacity would avoid it, and in those days diligence generally *did* pay; and it is true that failure as the result of sheer misfortune was comparatively rare. The times were favourable to success. The Yorkshire and Lancashire manufacturers then found markets where they now find rivals. Japan and India, which now compete with us even in England, were then among our best customers; and our factories could be run with the reasonable assurance that the goods would sell. Everywhere you saw men who had "come up from nothing," and who were making, without difficulty, great fortunes. No wonder, therefore, that men saved large fractions of their profits, and put them back into the business. The "crushing" income tax of sevenpence or a shilling in the pound still left them enough on which to live, in the quiet fashion which was then common. Few, even of the richest, had their houses far from their

offices, and as a rule their houses were comparatively small. I knew one man who did take a large mansion in the country; but, finding it too expensive, he gave it up at the first opportunity and returned to the town, his friends calling him a sensible fellow. He drove back in state in his carriage, sold it the next day, and thereafter took the bus. He was thus once more able to put aside a third of his gains. Except a few feckless ne'er-dowells, I knew nobody who lived up to his income, or indeed at anything like that rate.

Sometimes, unquestionably, this thrift was carried too far. A Yorkshireman, who had risen from the ranks, was making ten thousand a year before he was fifty; but he and his wife still lived contentedly in the house he had bought when he was making but three hundred; they kept no servant, and the wife did the washing and the baking, as she had done when they first married. What they were saving for, none could tell, for they had no children.

The vast majority, however, though thrifty enough to have satisfied Samuel Smiles himself, were far from ungenerous. They gave liberally to their churches or chapels. Many Methodists among them, and not Methodists only, followed literally John Wesley's precept, "Get all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Cynics called the giving habit by the opprobrious name of "fire insurance"<sup>1</sup>—a composition to save from hell—

<sup>1</sup> The largest "fire insurance" ever known was the donation of a quarter of a million to the Free Church of Scotland, by Mr. Baird, father of the sporting "Mr. Abington."

but, whatever its motive, it was almost universal.

Church-going also—another form, in a cynical view, of “fire insurance”—was almost universal; and in most cases, I think, there was little or no hypocrisy about the practice. There were, of course, some men who, like Dryden’s Shimei,

*Did wisely from expensive sins refrain,  
And never broke the Sabbath but for gain;*

and I knew a few who openly said that religion was an affair of Sundays only. On weekdays an entirely different code came into operation. Even here I would not be too censorious. It is a fault not unknown to-day. It resembles the conduct of statesmen who are strictly honourable—in private life. These business men were not, I think, conscious hypocrites. They maintained that their first duty was to live, and to keep weans and wife in decency and comfort. This, they said, plausibly enough, was quite impossible on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and they were not going to profess to follow those principles. Some of them plainly told their ministers so—thus setting the ministers a problem similar to their own. For the clergy have, like everybody else, to live, and to offend those on whom their living depends is not to be ventured without discrimination. And yet I knew many, both clerical and lay, who lived a truly Christian life, and who carried on their business “as ever in their great Taskmaster’s eye.”

There was one phrase which constantly recurs

## BUSINESS

to my memory as I recall these Napoleons of business. When pleading for some "cause," such as the renovation of the chapel, missions, or the horse-hire fund, the ministers rarely failed to tell the rich man that he was but the "steward" of his wealth; he did not own it, he was merely administering it for the Divine owner. The reference, I suppose, was to the text, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful"; and I never noticed that the rich man resented the sobriquet. In fact, whether because it was felt that after all Biblical language did not mean quite what it said, or for some other reason, I rarely observed that a man was offended when rebuked or exhorted by means of a Scriptural text. One could almost say "Get thee hence, Satan" to him without provoking resentment: and, short of that, the most pointed quotations would leave him undisturbed. Thus the man who, on weekdays, would boast of having made himself, and of being sole owner of his money, would submit meekly to being told on Sunday that he was only a treasurer of Another. As I have said, he gave, and gave liberally. Sometimes the minister, it is true, would encourage him in the good work by pointing out that he was "lending to the Lord," that the security was good, and that the rate of interest was high. The authority of hymnology might perhaps be added:

*Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee  
Repaid a thousandfold will be.*



## AS I REMEMBER

*Then gladly will we give to Thee,  
Who givest all.*<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to talk of such men as purse-proud and guinea-jingling, but, with the natural allowance for exceptions, I should say that this would be unfair. A man of course aimed at making money, but it was valued, in many cases, less for its own sake than as the external sign of success, and the success itself was valued chiefly as the reward of hard work honestly done. It was like a first-class in an examination to a sober and sensible student, not something to be bragged of, but the recognition of honest and steady application. It was to be welcomed with satisfaction, but not to be paraded. Many of the wealthiest men I knew, whose fortunes were—"under Providence"—due almost entirely to their own exertions, never showed a sign of self-complacency, but spoke, acted, and lived with perfect simplicity. They followed St. Paul's precept, and, while "doing their business, and working with their hands, studied to be quiet."

As a fair type of the best kind of Victorian merchant I might mention a man with whom I was very closely acquainted, and of whom I can speak with as near an approach to accuracy as is possible to fallible humanity. He was the eldest son of a Yorkshireman, whose family had owned a farm for centuries, but who, through a series of

<sup>1</sup> One distinguished minister was so persistent in the work of extracting money by striking this chord, and so successful in his operations, that when he "passed on," the preacher of his funeral sermon chose as his text, "And it came to pass that the beggar died."

misfortunes, had failed, had been to his great grief compelled to part with his holding, and had, shortly after his failure, died, leaving his widow, and several children, in very poor circumstances. My friend, who was then in business, took the whole burden on his own shoulders. At first he had a very hard struggle; for years he stared ruin in the face. But suddenly success came—by the blessing of Providence, as, in his simple piety, he always maintained. As money came in, it was providential that he was able to make his mother, and one of his sisters with her, comfortable. Providentially, a part of the old estate fell into the market; he purchased the old family house, and settled them in it. Providentially also he was able to give one of his brothers a good education, and finally to see him a prosperous doctor. Another he took into his firm. A nephew, through his aid, was enabled to become a clergyman. Not till he had set all this in train did he move out of the tiny house in which he had started, and take one more suitable to his position. Through all, he retained his original beliefs; and though he had, by his own exertions, made his fortune, he never failed, like Henry V after a no more wonderful victory, to “give full trophy, signal, and ostent, quite from himself to God”; and this with such absolute naturalness that not the most cynical could accuse him of cant. He was beloved by his workpeople, lavish in his charities, and perhaps the most highly respected man in the town. He died shortly before

the war, and was spared having to see the ruin of his business which followed, as well as having to mourn the death of his son—a young clergyman who, in the spirit of his father, enlisted as an ordinary soldier, and met the common fate of a second-lieutenant.

When I think of men like him—and there were many—I feel that whatever the Victorian faults may have been, there was something noble in the age that produced them, and that there has been, in the following years, a certain loss which is to be regretted. Whatever the cause, the war or something else, it is hard to-day to discover men of this kind. Like Elijah, we must, if we are honest, confess that we are not better than our fathers.

But what about the “workers”? Was there not a vast amount of tyranny, and were not the factories, the shops, and even the farms, “dark places of the earth, and full of cruelty”? Were not the wages horribly low, and was not there a fearful carelessness of human health and life? How far had the masters advanced beyond the state of affairs described in the unspeakable Bolton Report of 1842, which told of children of eight harnessed to trucks, and of women slowly killed by being compelled to work sixteen hours a day? Did not John Bright himself oppose the Ten Hours Bill, and did not the Nonconformist clergy keep silence on these questions?

The answer is to be found in the statistics and records of the time; and even there not in full.

Naturally I did not come across many cases of heartlessness and savagery: these things love secrecy. But I believe that there were many such cases. A gentleman told me that in the sixties, the heyday of rural prosperity, he had seen a farmer brutally thrashing one of his men, and that, when he remonstrated, he had received the answer of the old Duke of Newcastle, "Cannot I do what I will with my own?" The saddest thing in the scene was that the victim was too spirit-broken to resist. A wage of eight or ten shillings a week had produced the usual effect; the man's mind was crushed even more utterly than his body. I have also heard stories of the tyranny of factory foremen and mining jacks-in-office which made one's blood boil. These men, having sometimes risen from a low position, were only too fond of showing their power by bullying their quondam mates; they were like negroes set over other negroes, who, it is said, were far worse than white overseers.

But we must remember that it was this very Victorian age that witnessed the improvement. In Victoria's reign the Trades Unions gained full legal recognition;<sup>1</sup> in the same reign Joseph Arch began the work for the freedom of the agricultural labourers, which led to their emancipation by the Franchise Act of 1884; and a whole host of Acts, like the Employers' Liability, were passed for the benefit of the down-trodden.

We must remember also that, whatever Carlyle

<sup>1</sup> Nay, if we are to believe Wilkie Collins's *Armada*, the Trades Unions were already, in the seventies, too powerful, and were in their turn becoming tyrants.

might say about the "cash-nexus," it was probably less galling then than now. An employer, as Mr. Baldwin recently said, *was* an employer. He knew his men, their Christian names, their wives and children. If, as was often the case, he was a good employer, the relation was in a measure a family relation. In many cases he had introduced a co-operative system, by which the men shared in the profits of the firm. I have known men who were as loyal to their factory as an Etonian to Eton, and who felt towards the master as a Rugby boy felt towards Dr. Arnold. No one could wish for a higher testimonial than Bright, when he was slandered by his enemies, received from his Rochdale operatives. There were many like him; and he was right in maintaining that if all masters were of that kind, Factory Acts would be unnecessary. What he forgot was that laws are for the lawless.

Since then the huge combine has come in, a *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*—without body to be kicked or soul to be damned. The humanity has departed from business, and has left something intangible and implacable behind it; a Juggernaut car more ruthless than the old unfenced machinery which it took so many years and so many Acts of Parliament to abolish. The unclean spirit was, with a mighty effort, cast out, but it has returned with seven others worse than itself. I am not sure that the average worker of 1875, with all his disadvantages, would, always, if he could see his descendant to-day, feel inclined to envy him.

## CHAPTER VII

### LITERATURE

I AM NOT proposing here to write a chapter of literary criticism. The Victorian writers have been discussed *ad nauseam*, and we are constantly celebrating, with new "appraisals," either their births or their deaths. The centenary, in fact, of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker; each minute teems a new one. In many cases a man of little importance during his life gains a moment's notoriety by having died a hundred years ago. What I want to speak of, very briefly, is the Victorian *reader* as I knew him.

I have already spoken of the religious book, whether biographical or devotional, which was by far the most common reading of the people I knew best. There was an enormous public for such a book as Dean Goulburn's *Personal Religion*, even though the pure "Gospel" was hardly taught in it; and still vaster numbers bought, lent, and studied Hannah Whitall Smith's *Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. For Christmas presents, the little books of Frances Ridley Havergal were blessed both to giver and receiver. Sermons, too, were pored over in a fashion hardly easy to realise to-day.

To judge by the popularity of this class of literature, one might have been still in the eighteenth

century. Alexander Maclaren's *Sermons Preached in Manchester*<sup>1</sup> were taken down on Sunday afternoons, read aloud, and discussed as Seed's *Sermons* and Ogden on *Prayer* were discussed in Dr. Johnson's time. Maclaren was a Baptist; but I have seen on the shelves of Nonconformist ministers the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* of Newman, some of which, though naturally not all, were greatly admired.

As rigid orthodoxy declined, sermons from the most "liberal" schools of thought were admitted. Those of Robertson of Brighton penetrated, I should think by thousands, into Evangelical households; and their silent influence in breaking down barriers must have been tremendous. This is the more remarkable as they were very poorly reported, being often put together from the notes of hearers, and never revised. Of their power when spoken I can of course adduce only second-hand witness.<sup>2</sup> I knew one old man, highly educated and refined, who had heard Robertson many times, and his emphatic verdict was, "The greatest preacher the Church of England ever had"—high praise from one who had read Jeremy Taylor. Certain it is that his Assize Sermon kept two of the toughest Judges of the Queen's Bench awake and keenly attentive for forty minutes.

More remarkable than the welcome given to

<sup>1</sup> As read, they seemed remarkably calm and restrained: but I have been told by those who heard Maclaren that they were delivered with the utmost intensity and passion.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson died in 1853, having accomplished more in thirty-seven years than most men in eighty.

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Robertson, who was at any rate technically orthodox, was the admission of Martineau to the same shelf as Alexander Maclaren; for a Unitarian was still looked upon with horror, and even Channing, as we have seen, was only just tolerated as "better than his creed."<sup>1</sup> But Martineau's eloquence and genius, which attracted so sound an Anglican as Gladstone to his chapel, prevailed over all prejudice, and his *Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*—it is true not till towards the end of the century—took their place with Robertson, and not too far from Wesley and Maclaren. I doubt, indeed, if these noble discourses have ever been surpassed for originality or beauty of expression.

When we pass from theology to poetry, we are scarcely conscious of the transition; for the Poet Laureate himself was read, perhaps chiefly, as a religious philosopher, and the most popular among the lesser bards were, if not philosophers, at any rate safely religious. Of these, James Montgomery, the Sheffield hymn-writer, was to be seen on scores of drawing-room tables. Even Byron was supposed to have some soul of goodness in him because he praised the *Wanderer of Switzerland* and thought that beautiful poem, "The Common Lot," worthy of a serious versified reply. I was encouraged to read every line of Montgomery, and did so; and, if the verses I retain in my memory are good samples of his general work, I think I might have spent my

<sup>1</sup> I used to hear awestruck whispers that Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes were Unitarians. How could adherents of so dreadful a creed contrive to write such beautiful books and maintain so Christian a tone?



time worse. Living in Sheffield, I often heard steel manufacturers boasting of him as a shining literary light of the town. Of Ebenezer Elliott, not unnaturally, they spoke with less enthusiasm: they regarded him as the poet of strikers and rattaners. Montgomery, it was true, had been imprisoned for Radicalism, but his hymns were safely non-political, and he had not ventured on "When wilt Thou save the People?" Still, "Sheffield was poetically fortunate. It had not given birth to two poets, but it had *made* them."

On the same table, alongside Montgomery, lay Mrs. Hemans, and on the piano half a dozen of her songs with "Music by her Sister" on the title-page. Popularity being inexplicable, I shall not try to explain Mrs. Hemans's vogue. But it was at any rate excusable. She wrote scarcely a single unmusical line, and what she wrote was usually sense. Much more strange was the success of Martin Tupper, whose *Proverbial Philosophy*, though neither rhyme nor reason, was almost literally everywhere. Here however one has to remember that a large sale does not always mean a large number of readers. It was known that Queen Victoria loved and admired the book; and it was therefore bought, and set in a conspicuous place. But I never met a single person who had read more than a page of it. It was as unreadable then as now; and when Calverley published his contemptuous parody, very few people, if they had not seen the title, would have known what he was doing.

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Something similar, amid difference, might be said of certain other poets. I heard Jean Ingelow read aloud once or twice, and she was certainly praised; but she was not much read in private. And when she too, in her turn, was parodied by Calverley, not one in fifty knew the name of the victim.

When one recalls the poets who were then enormously popular, and thinks of the waves of oblivion which have rolled over them since, one can only wonder whether some great names of to-day will not seem to our grandchildren monuments of our amazing bad taste. How often did I hear the "Burial of Moses" recited to enraptured audiences, and who would listen to it to-day? How many copies of Nathaniel Parker Willis were purchased and pored over in my youth, and how many are purchased in 1936? Who could to-day recite two lines of the *Sacrifice of Abraham* or the *Widow of Nain*? And how did the students of Brown University endure the three hundred lines of bad blank verse which Willis poured out to them in 1831? Did they cheer when they heard that

*It is a lesson oftener learned than loved—  
All knowledge is not nourishment. The mind  
May pine upon its food.*

Perhaps, indeed, they *did* cheer when the poet added, "I need not follow the similitude," until they found that he did follow it through eighty more lines. In any case, Willis had an audience, fit and many, on both sides of the Atlantic. Those who

wish to see what he was like may look up a poem of a hundred lines, mercifully called "Extract." This, with probably four hundred more, was delivered at Yale, on the departure of the Senior Class in 1827. They may indeed have been glad to depart after that. But there is no sign that they showed any open disapproval.

More popular even than Willis was Lydia Sigourney, whose portrait, with its ringlets and "Berthe" collar, shows the fashion of the time in dress, and whose enormous vogue shows its literary taste. "I have no memoir to write of her," says the sponsor of the English edition; "she needs none. There is nothing in this book," he adds modestly—"except perhaps the humble preface which I am now writing—that is not sweetly and sublimely good." This did not shock the public sense. Hardly an anthology of the time was without a specimen of Mrs. Sigourney; and possibly no poem was better known or more often recited than "Somebody's Darling."

Both Nathaniel and Lydia were favourites in Evangelical circles, largely because they so often treated of Biblical subjects, or proclaimed sound doctrines. To use the phrase of Augustine Birrell about Dean Farrar, they persistently "elongated the Gospels," though it was not the habit of the time to increase their sin by "shortening Sir Walter."

Even such as these had their imitators. I have still on my shelves a book of the sixties, "*Biblical Events in Verse*," dedicated, in filial affection, to little Florence

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by her papa the author." Inspired doubtless by the "Burial of Moses," this writer gives us a "Burial of Aaron."

*Brother of Moses, farewell !  
Winds o'er thy grave sing a knell ;  
Echoes of thy memory tell  
Silently.<sup>1</sup>  
Tabernacle rites are o'er,  
Sacrifice thou wilt no more,  
Nor the anointing oil pour  
Sacerdotally.*

But I cannot find that this work had a wide circulation. Its chief interest lies in the light it throws on the vast influence exerted by poetry of the Willis and Sigourney kind on the less gifted intellects and less highly inspired spirits of the Victorian age.

One saw on the shelves, or on the tables, many books that were survivals of earlier times, salvaged perhaps from an atavistic library, but certainly read only by those who could read anything. Such were Pollok's once-famous *Course of Time*,<sup>2</sup> Blair's gloomy and powerful *Grave*, Graham's *Sabbath* (beautifully bound and printed), and L. E. L.'s *Improvisatrice*, which had long since ceased to arouse interest. I

<sup>1</sup> With this fine oxymoron we may compare Mrs. Browning's "thunders of blue silence" in *Bertha in the Lane*.

<sup>2</sup> In the thirties two young fools "went to scoff" at a Methodist local preacher. They arrived precisely at the moment when he happened to be quoting from Pollok a terrific description of the Last Judgment. The effect was instantaneous; they were struck with godly fear, and "remained to pray."

Pollok could indeed be terrible. He pictured the hireling clergyman as standing at the Last Judgment before the bar,

"Unfrocked, unbeneficed, uncorpulent."

have seen people take down Kirk White's *Poems* to relieve the monotony of a long railway journey, or perhaps to prove that there are things more monotonous still. In Nottingham, of course, White enjoyed a fictitious reputation. Along with Bailey's *Festus*,<sup>1</sup> *Clifton Grove* was ostensibly the literary glory of the town; but it was hard to discover a single reader of either of these works. It was shrewdly suspected that White owed his fame entirely to having died young, while Bailey had lost his by living to be too old.

Sentimentality, I suppose, may be defined as decayed pathos. What made the parents cry makes the children laugh. There was, in the mid-Victorian time, a vast amount of sentimentality of this kind. Longfellow's shorter poems, the "Children's Hour," "The Two Angels," "There is no flock however watched and tended," were known by heart. Less meritorious verses, like Charles Mackay's and Eliza Cook's, were known and read of all women. "The Old Arm Chair," especially as sung by Henry Russell, never failed to draw tears; and the pathetic songs of Helen Marion Burnside were crooned with the same effect. Precisely similar lachrymosity might have been observed at the performances of the Christy Minstrels,<sup>2</sup> who always

<sup>1</sup> Bailey's mistake was a strange one. Whenever, which was often, a new issue of *Festus* was demanded, he made enormous additions, which ultimately increased a manageable poem of three hundred ordinary pages to seven hundred of very close print. This final redaction, I am sure, was read through by nobody: but you could see it in many libraries.

<sup>2</sup> *Once we had a fragrant blossom,  
Full of sweetness, full of love,  
But the angels came and plucked it  
For the beauteous realms above.*

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varied their comic turns with pathetic ballads describing how a drunkard's child died while he was carousing, or with others that bade us "put away the little dresses that the darling used to wear." These dirges drew iron tears down the Plutonian cheeks of the hardest-hearted manufacturers and the most Ricardian of economists.

The place now occupied by the detective novel, in fact, was then held by the tragic story. Thousands bought *Misunderstood* and watered it with their tears. Still more thousands pored over *Eric*, in which there were three unnecessary deaths; and I doubt if *St. Winifred's* would have had half its circulation if Daubeny had not died in it to the accompaniment of a hymn. Even *Tom Brown*, which is the reverse of mawkish, murders one of its boys, and over it, as over the *Iliad*, broods the tragedy of a coming death. But this was part of the truth of the tale. Few lustrums pass over any large school without seeing at least one fatal illness, and school tales which avoid this omit one essential feature of the scene. Nevertheless, there is something strange, to our minds, in the fascination this theme had for our grandfathers. With all their stoicism they felt the "tears of things," and snatched from them a painful joy. They might have been harking back a hundred years to the age of *Clarissa*.

The same thing was clearly visible in the sermons, of which perhaps one in four—quite apart from the regular funeral discourses—devoted at least ten

minutes to the theme of mourning. No text was more often quoted than that in which Abraham appeals to Ephron for a place wherein he could "bury his dead out of his sight"; and I have seen whole congregations wiping their eyes as they heard the familiar words. Someone would start sobbing, and the contagion would spread like a fever. The minister himself might begin it: it is said that one, who was known as "the weeping prophet," took precautions against misplacing the pathos by marking his manuscript with blue pencil, "Cry here." But even though it was known that the pathos had been prepared and was being deliberately led up to, it rarely failed in its aim. The same people who expected it beforehand and would smile at it on the morrow, yielded to the spell at the moment.

When real genius is applied to evoking pathos it is impossible to exaggerate its power. I have known many men who heard Dickens's recitals of Little Nell, Paul Dombey, or Tiny Tim; and their descriptions are enough to show what an actor and orator he was. Some of them wept from the mere memory. Nay, I well remember a schoolboy reciting Paul's death to an audience of his fellows. It is true that he was a boy with a natural gift, and that he afterwards became a distinguished speaker; but it was the *substance* that moved the hearers, and moved they were. When he ended, there was a dead silence for at least a minute; and it was not till he had left the platform and reached his seat

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that the listeners remembered to give him a cheer.<sup>1</sup>

I do not think this sentimentality ought to be despised. We all know Plato's objection to tragedy—that it makes you feel emotion which leads to no corresponding action: an objection which was taken against novels by many moral writers in the Victorian age. But I think the Aristotelian answer might well apply here: the minds of the Victorian audiences were purged, by means of pity and terror, of those very emotions. Nor did the effect stop there. There is no doubt that Dickens's pathetic pictures *did* lead to action in many cases. Scores of improvements were directly due to his writings and readings. Not for nothing did Daniel Webster tell his hearers that Dickens had done more to ameliorate the lot of the poor than all the statesmen put together: and the distinguished Congregationalist minister, Baldwin Brown (author of *The Divine Life in Man*) put Dickens's works along with the London City Mission as the chief social agency in the country. This was because the

<sup>1</sup> I may perhaps repeat here a story which throws light on Dickens's character and on the way in which his novels grew. A gentleman who knew him well (and whom my father knew) used often to go walks with him in the neighbourhood of Gadshill. On one of these walks a beggar asked alms, and Dickens gave him sixpence. The man thanked him, and departed. This was positively all that happened. But, from that moment, during all the remainder of the walk, Dickens said not a word, though the gentleman noticed that he was silently laughing, and that his lips were moving. When they reached home, Dickens entertained his family at lunch with a most vivid and dramatic account of the interview. The beggar's accent, his gestures, Dickens's replies, were all presented with incomparable mimetic force; and the family could scarcely eat their meal for laughing. The friend was convinced that Dickens thought he was telling the truth.

It was exactly in this fashion that the delightful picture of Mrs. Billickin in *Edwin Drood* grew out of a two-minutes' very ordinary talk with a landlady.



audiences not only listened to Dickens, but did the things which he said.

In really pious circles a certain class of books enjoyed an enormous vogue and probably reached as wide a public, in proportion to population, as any books ever known. In particular, the "Lily Series" deserves mention. This included perhaps forty religious novels, mostly American, of proved Evangelical tendency, priced at a shilling each; and they were bought by hundreds of thousands. Some were obviously autobiographical: Mrs. Prentiss's *Stepping Heavenward* might have been, and in part probably was, an actual diary.<sup>1</sup> For children there were *What Katy Did* and its sequel, which shared with *Little Women* the place of honour among the treasures of the library. Mrs. Stuart Phelps's *Gates Ajar*, which displayed a Dantesque acquaintance with the topography of Paradise, was almost as popular as *Stepping Heavenward*. In this book the heroine not only steps on the path but seems to attain the goal. I have known people who had read every volume of this series, including even

<sup>1</sup> Many passages of this book remain in my memory. One, in particular, may be worth repeating. The heroine has been, for a wonder, indulging in play with her children, and her sister-in-law has been looking on in amazement.

"I do not understand you, Katy," said she. "Just now you were sewing as if your life depended on it, and then you were romping about with those rough boys as if you hadn't a care in the world."

I saw Una (the eldest daughter, an invalid) look up with intense interest as I replied, "I have always aimed at this flexibility."

The book, *mirabile dictu*, was actually Bowdlerised. Katy, much to her mother's distress, was inveigled into a school-girl engagement with a man of the world. In one edition of the book this interesting episode was represented by a row of asterisks.

If, as is not unlikely, this be taken as the *ne plus ultra* of Victorian priggery, it must be remembered that it was laughed at as much then as now.

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*Something to Do* and *Gypsy's Cousin Joy*, not once only, but in many cases half a dozen times. "I can recommend every one of these books," said a pious lady to a friend, "except only *The Shady Side* and *The Sunny Side*."

There was also a large public for the semi-religious novels of Mrs. Charles: the *Schönberg-Cotta Family*, dealing with the times of Luther; the *Diary of Kitty Trevylyan*, on John Wesley, the *Victory of the Vanquished*, on the early days of Christianity in Rome. Equally popular, but on a distinctly lower literary level, were the stories of A.L.O.E., some of which, like *Exiles in Babylon*, gave narrative in one chapter, a sermon in the next, and so on throughout the book. By omitting the sermon, you could get through the story in a very short time.

Though Charlotte Mary Yonge's novels were, in intention, High Anglican propaganda, yet she was so good a tale-teller, and her characterisation was so excellent—to say nothing of her moral tone—that the *Heir of Redclyffe* and the *Daisy Chain* found, I should believe, as many Nonconformist as High Church readers. Children, to whom she mainly appealed, paid little attention to the Puseyism: her heroes were exactly the kind to excite the admiration of schoolgirls.

It would be tedious to mention one-tenth of the religious authors whose names were once household words—Elizabeth Wetherell, the author of *Queechy* and the *Wide Wide World* (the latter the

one novel which Bishop Thirlwall could not get through); E. P. Roe, who turned the great fire of Chicago to pious use in *Barriers Burnt Away*; Lew Wallace, whose *Ben Hur*, once enormously popular as a novel, recently gained renewed fame as a film-show; Grace Aguilar, author of the *Days of Bruce*; "Charlotte Elizabeth," most prolific of writers; Mary Charlesworth, whose *Ministering Children* was to be seen in thousands of homes; Dinah Mulock, whose *John Halifax* taught her huge public what a "gentleman" was—though I have heard doubts expressed about it because John Halifax swore an oath—once in his life.<sup>1</sup> I pass over multitudes of others; but I cannot refrain from naming Mrs. Henry Wood, whose *East Lynne*, though hesitatingly accepted because of its sensationalism, contrived to pass muster as teaching a moral lesson and as bringing the wicked baronet to deserved punishment in the end. Her magazine, *The Argosy*, was taken in regularly along with the *Leisure Hour* and *Chambers's Journal*; and exciting stories like *In the Dead of Night* were eagerly devoured. But it would be a great mistake to judge the whole Evangelical world by those who revelled in stories like these. As much as to-day, there were serious readers, relatively few, but absolutely many. A Methodist minister, for instance, after two or three years at college, had four years of probation before he could be ordained. At the end of each of

<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, the readers were left to conjecture the exact words of the blasphemy.

these years, he had not only to pass a really searching examination on set subjects, but to satisfy his superiors that his general reading had been of an intellectual kind. One candidate of whom I have heard made, indeed, somewhat exaggerated claims. He asserted that he had read the whole of the *Decline and Fall* and had "verified all the references"—thus effectively securing his rejection.<sup>1</sup> But the vast majority, more modest and truthful, certainly made good use of their time, and found or strengthened, during these probationary years, a taste for reading which never left them.

I have never met more persistent students than were to be found among the Nonconformist intelligentsia. One minister I knew was a perfect miracle of reading; he must have rivalled Magliabecchi or Macaulay. He was a master of ecclesiastical history from A.D. 1 to 1845; but he contrived to read almost every serious book, on any topic whatever, that came out in his time, whether it was the *Origin of Species* or James Hinton's *Mystery of Pain*. How he found time for it all I cannot imagine, for he was a good pastoral visitor and prepared his sermons carefully; nor was he like another I knew, who learnt the Greek Testament by glancing at a verse between knocking at a door and obtaining admission.

<sup>1</sup> A candidate who wished to escape the three years at College tried to pose as a Greek scholar. When asked for proof, he said he had been struck with the number of "yaps" in the Greek Testament. The reader who knows the language will perhaps recognise in this a common Greek conjunction. The aspirant did not even gain admission to College: he remains, if still alive, among the laity.

Here, perhaps, I may be allowed to turn aside for a moment. The man who performed this feat, and who, by a previous exercise of his portentous verbal memory, had learned all Wesley's hymns by heart, happened to be distributing the prizes at a school I knew. He actually held up his achievement as an example for the boys to follow. This roused the wrath of the Vicar of a country parish close by, whose ideas were of another kind. This clergyman, who took a great interest in the school, and regularly presented a cricket-bat or a fishing-rod as a prize for attainments of a non-scholastic order, at once rose and expressed his total disagreement with the previous speaker. "No, my boys," said he, "when you are batting think of that and nothing else. Bowl with all your might, fish with all your might; and when you are knocking at a door, knock with all your might. Concentrate all your thoughts on that knocker, and let the Greek Testament take care of itself." The boys had always loved this delightful clergyman; they loved him more after that speech.

I have, in fact, often thought that a most interesting book might be made about the speeches made at prize-givings, which exhibit the British orator in a most peculiar light. I have heard princes and princesses, bishops, statesmen, noblemen, generals, colonial governors, American and Japanese ambassadors, and even educationists. With all their differences, these people have had a core of similarity. They have all, or nearly all, failed to

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get prizes at school, and offer this fact as an encouragement to those boys who have similarly failed. They all ignore the parents, and address themselves to the pupils. There are, however, points of difference. The generals give vent to theories of education; the educationists discourse on war. Speaking specially to the younger lads, one orator told them not to pursue a "fugitive and cloistered virtue"; another, quoting Matthew Arnold's "Rugby Chapel," remarked that here was a poem everybody ought to know by heart, but stuck hopelessly in his own quotation from it; a third, a bishop, spent all his time in discoursing on the merits of Latin versifying.

A few, by happy inspiration, hit the point. The shortest speech I recall was by Lord Cromer. "I have only three things to say to you. Love your country, tell the truth, *and don't dawdle*"—this last in a rasping and telling tone which seemed to convey that he had suffered in Egypt from dawdling subordinates. Another speaker congratulated the boys on being able to choose their own books for prizes. "It wasn't so in my time," said he. "My Head Master had a dear friend who had written a book that wouldn't sell—and I don't wonder, for I've tried to read it. Wanting to do to his friend as he would have liked his friend to do to him, he wrote to the publishers, and ordered a keg of the volumes. At the prize-giving, therefore, every boy received the same work, and one unlucky youth who had got three prizes received three copies of it. Thus

the Head contrived, without any expense to himself, to confer a benefit on author and publisher alike." Mr. Choate, the famous American ambassador, was even more successful. His magnificent presence—he was one of the few great men I have seen who looked great—and his perfect command of language, carried the audience with him. The school was a young one, and in Cambridge. "You are new," he began; "your walls are not, like those of a neighbouring university, wet with the spray of the Deluge." A boy, small in person but great in brain, who was afterwards Senior Classic at Cambridge, had been up several times to receive prizes. "What shall I say of Jones?" said Mr. Choate. "I get almost tired of seeing him. He seems to me the most amazing example of *multum in parvo* I have ever struck."

But to return from this digression, and attempt the wide leap from schools to the very different theme of scholarship. It would be hard to do justice to the learning acquired by many of these students, in varied branches of knowledge, despite the scanty leisure allowed them by their ministerial work. I knew one who, by rising regularly at five, found time to work at several different subjects, and, in order to compel himself to master them thoroughly, took degrees in all of them. He became an M.A., a B.Sc., and a B.D., in addition to passing the London examination in Hebrew and New Testament Greek. He only regretted that he could not follow John Wesley's precept and rise at four. Another,

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confining his attention to a narrower field, contrived to do his duty as a preacher and pastor and yet to become thoroughly acquainted with the life and works of Erasmus. Dr. Dale of Birmingham, I remember, regretted that he had not the leisure "to keep up his Syriac": but, despite writing his very exacting books, he managed to "keep up" everything else, and even to increase his great store of knowledge. Others, less voracious, confined themselves to few books, but knew them. They were like Robertson of Brighton, who said, "There is not a schoolgirl in my congregation who hasn't read more books than I, but those I *have* read are *mine*." An elderly minister of my acquaintance, so far as I could tell, knew but five English poets of high rank—Milton, Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth, and Tennyson: but these he knew almost by heart. I once showed him Omar Khayyám. He read some stanzas with interest. "Yes," he said, "it's not bad, but Burns has done it better," and straightway poured out forty lines of the Scottish poet. On another occasion, something suggested "The Task" to him, and he gave us a hundred, with such energy and enthusiasm that boredom was impossible. When he was past seventy, I induced him with some difficulty to read Browning. Ere long he was as familiar with *Pompilia* as with *Table Talk*.

But Tennyson was the real idol. He hit the public taste between wind and water; he lent a cachet to sentimentality and repute to religion. Every word he wrote was treasured. One somewhat brusque and



thick-skinned friend of mine learnt "In Memoriam" by heart in a curious fashion. He put it up on the dressing-table before him and recited the lines to the swing of his Indian clubs, clinching the matter by singing them in the cold bath which always, winter and summer, followed his physical exercises. Another achieved the same feat by taking the book with him in his country walks: he was led to it by hearing that Robertson had called it the most precious poem of the century and had written a commentary on it. As for "Guinevere," now perhaps the most lightly regarded of all Tennyson's poems,<sup>1</sup> it was then, in spite of, or because of, its somewhat priggish sentiment, more popular than even "In Memoriam." "I like it extremely," said Macaulay, "notwithstanding some faults, extremely." Many people did not see the faults. At school, a master lent me a book on Tennyson by a well-known author of the time. This writer, a fair specimen of the best criticism then known, set "Guinevere" at the very topmost peak of English poetry.<sup>2</sup> Less authoritative judges agreed with him. A lady was reading the poem aloud in a little company. In the middle she paused, overcome by the "blameless King's vast pity"; "I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere." "What a splendid fellow Arthur is," she said; and all assented. There were

<sup>1</sup> With the possible exception of the "Skipping-Rope" and the "May Queen."

<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that Edgar Allan Poe (assuredly no sentimentalist) judging by the volume of 1842 (he died in 1849), ranked Tennyson, in all seriousness, as the greatest poet that ever lived.

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many who would not have required to read it—they knew every word. I have heard it recited from end to end in a school Literary Society; and the boys listened entranced to every one of its eight hundred lines.

It was not till the eighties that this glory began to be a little dimmed. Gradually the discovery was made that, in sheer abundance and intellect, Browning was the greater man. There were people who whispered that they had found more consolation in "La Saisiaz" than in "In Memoriam"; and it was, I think, through this poem that, strange as it may now seem, Browning penetrated into Evangelical circles—though the "Pied Piper," of course, was recited to children. I recall the astonishment with which a certain company heard a man of authority pronounce that Browning was no longer to be thought of merely as the husband of his wife; that, in fact, the time would come when the author of *Aurora Leigh* would be remembered, perhaps solely, as the wife of the author of *Men and Women*. Slowly it began to be perceived that "Rabbi ben Ezra" and "A Death in the Desert" had a lesson to teach. It was observed that Dean Farrar quoted these and other poems with approval; and the victory was finally won as speedily as the long-dubious battle of Waterloo. Ministers began actually to refer to him in sermons; lectures, adorned with largely unintelligible quotations, were given in the Literary Societies. In Birmingham, for example, that admirable lecturer, George Dawson, played a

large part in popularising the "new" poet; and, though few of his hearers got through "Sordello," a large number purchased and studied the smaller poems. Tennyson now had to share the summit of Parnassus; nay, what would have seemed impossible ten years before—his admirers were sometimes thrown on the defensive. As if to provide a further illustration of Bentley's saying that no man was ever written down except by himself, he contributed to his own decline. He wrote "The Promise of May," which no one could defend.

But there were other causes of this relative descent. The young, and some of the old, were discovering Swinburne and Morris, and finding in them something to admire which was altogether different from what they had worshipped in Tennyson. The "Defence of Guenevere" was unlike "Guinevere," and, they said, better. "Tristram of Lyonesse" had a romance in it more glamorous than "The Last Tournament," and none of its moralising. Nor were they deterred by the attacks of Robert Buchanan on the "Fleshly School of Poetry": prudery was going out, and the attack, like putting a book on the *Index Expurgatorius*, only led people the more eagerly to read "Songs before Sunrise," "Laus Veneris," and Rossetti's poems. It was impossible after this to think of Tennyson as an Ararat standing alone. Even if he were allowed to be Everest, there were other peaks around him nearly as lofty and majestic.

Of all distinguished Victorian writers, the one most utterly detested by Nonconformists was

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Matthew Arnold, and nowonder, for the supercilious air with which he habitually spoke of them would have stirred Moses to revenge and Job to impatience. Without knowing anything about them, he told men like Dr. Dale of Birmingham and Dr. Allon of Islington that they needed knowledge, refinement, and culture; and this, to use the words of Mrs. Gamp, was what lambs would not forgive nor worms forget. What made things worse was that he was a degenerate son; for Dr. Arnold of Rugby, whatever Puseyites might think of him, was the admired of all Dissenters.

As is the way of humanity, they read what made their blood boil. *Literature and Dogma*, *Culture and Anarchy*, *Friendship's Garland*, they studied with fascinated fury. But they would not look at either the poetry or the critical works. At school, having won some prize or other, I asked my Head Master for *Essays in Criticism*. He positively snorted. "Isn't he the greatest critic living, sir?" I ventured. "Fiddlesticks!" he retorted. The fact is, the Head was not only a Nonconformist but a Fellow of a Cambridge college, and he had met Arnold, and seen him walking in the Cambridge courts, looking Oxonian and cultured—a sight never to be forgotten. After that, he was not going to increase the sale of Arnold's works by a single copy. He was delighted when he heard a person of recondite knowledge describe Arnold as the most ignorant man he had ever met: "Why, the fellow doesn't even know how to cast a horoscope." "That isn't the only

thing he doesn't know," the Head replied grimly.

But the young were less affected by Arnold's unhappy mannerisms than their elders. Not fretting about *Culture and Anarchy*, they read *Sohrab and Rustum* and admired it. They even got hold of the *Essays in Criticism*, and, though the terrible priggishness of the paper on Shelley annoyed them as much as the attacks on Nonconformity had annoyed their parents, they learnt much from most of the others. They soon noticed, between the lines, indications that Arnold was no great idolater of Tennyson; and the combination of their feeling for Arnold's own poems with their acceptance of his critical canons drew them insensibly away from the Tennysonian cult. They never, it is true, went as far in depreciation as their own children; but they admitted that there were spots in the sun. I should imagine that they attained as near to the final judgment of that great but unequal poet as is possible for any single generation. They owned with Professor Elton that he was touched with the *Halbheit* spirit: he never went as far as he ought to have gone. And they agreed with Verrall of Cambridge that he might have said of himself in the words of Gilbert:

*There will be too much of me  
In the coming by and by.*

He had been too loquacious, and ought to have suppressed a quarter of his poems. But they recognised his unfailing grace, his exact observation

of nature, and his almost unique power of phrase-making.

Many of the men whom I have labelled the intelligentsia were not, in the technical academic sense of the word, scholars; nor should I compare them, on the average, with the ministers of the Scottish Church, Free or Established, whom I regard as probably the best-educated hierarchy in the world. They could read, but not write, Latin and Greek, and, like Burke, they were sometimes guilty of false quantities. An Etonian, if he could have been induced to listen to them, would have shuddered at some of their vagaries of pronunciation; but, had he lived with them for any length of time, he would have been bound to confess that in the weightier matters of the law they were often far ahead of the grammatical pundits. To ridicule them for saying *vectigal*, or *fons et origo* (which I have heard from men who have read Tertullian and Cyprian) was as contemptible as for the squires in the House of Commons to laugh at Bright for talking of the Pitchley Hounds. How many Church of England clergymen, educated at Oxford or Cambridge, could say, as a self-educated, degreeless minister said to me, "I never preach a sermon on a New Testament text without seeing what Meyer or Lightfoot has to say about it, or on an Old Testament text without studying the Hebrew with the help of a commentary" ?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, as is well known, insisted that his preachers should study. If they said, "We have no time," he replied, "Make the time": if they said, "We can't make it," then "Go back to your trades." The results were

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As I remember those days, it seems to me that the talk, when it did not run on religion and politics, ran almost exclusively on books. At lunch, the father, fresh from his four hours' morning study, would distribute fragments of it to his children, and sometimes these scraps were curious enough. I cannot have been more than ten years old when I was regaled with a little lecture on the Synod of Dort; and at twelve I knew at least the names of Origen, Marcion, and Athanasius. As for more secular heroes, I cannot remember when I did not know of Bruce, Socrates, or Oliver Cromwell. No scandal was ever talked, unless it was about Queen Elizabeth. Fortunately there were occasional lighter themes. With certain twinges of conscience, the morning might have been "wasted" over a novel of Scott or Kingsley, and we got the benefit of it; or there might have been a divagation to the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, and we heard a prose version of one or two of them. If, as not infrequently happened, another minister appeared at the table, there were anecdotes of Dr. Chalmers or Robert

occasionally astonishing. Of Thomas Walsh, a young Irishman, Wesley said, "Such a Hebrew scholar I never saw. Ask him about any word you chose, and he would give you all its meanings, quoting in full, with references, all the passages in which the various meanings occur." Walsh died, worn out with travels and study, at twenty-eight.

A most interesting story is that of the meeting between Adam Clarke, the Methodist commentator, and Richard Porson, when Porson was dying. The two conversed, almost exclusively, by means of Greek quotations, and Clarke was not far behind the great scholar in aptness and readiness. He could probably have done the same in Latin, Hebrew, or Arabic: yet he was practically self-taught.

Walsh and Clarke, of course, were very exceptional men, but I knew many who, in their measure, were not unworthy of being mentioned in the same breath with them.

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Hall, with "specimens of their wares"—an inducement to seek out their books on the library shelves. It was in this way that I was led to discover Channing's "Essay on Milton" (an admirable supplement to Macaulay's) and John Foster on "Decision of Character"—a little heavy in style, but admirable in its suggestiveness and profundity of thought.

I am, indeed, not certain that some of these students did not carry their "love of learning" to a "fault," and show themselves occasionally too "severe" to those who had none of it. They might put "the grace of God" first, but it was sometimes with an effort. "He never reads" was a depreciatory phrase I often heard on their lips, applied to some man whose piety could not but command respect. Fathers would urge their sons to study with fully as much earnestness as to pursue the path of salvation, and they talked of Hannibal as enthusiastically as of St. Paul. Not to enjoy Virgil or Horace was hardly distinguishable from a sin: and if a lad had read through Macaulay or Gibbon it was counted to him for righteousness. "Read Macaulay," said an elderly minister in my presence to a young man. "I was a student at college when his History was coming out. We were all agog waiting for it to be put in the Library, and I won the race for being the first to get it." But if I were once to begin on Macaulay, Froude, Carlyle, or John Richard Green, I should never bring this chapter to an end.

At this point, perhaps I may refer to a feature



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of Nonconformist character which needs explanation. It was just this width of learning which in some cases coexisted with a certain antagonism to the Church of England. Conscious of their knowledge and capacity, many Nonconformists resented their social inferiority to the Anglican clergy, and did not see why an Oxford degree, which was perhaps only a "pass," should confer a cachet of distinction. One of the greatest theological scholars in England, whose attainments in Hebrew and New Testament Greek, to say nothing of a dozen other languages, were almost unique, once confessed that the temptation which took the most grace to overcome was to feel resentment at the sight of an ignorant curate, who had never heard of Eutyches or Nestorius, and yet looked superior. This feeling was widespread, and—whether justified or not—was the secret of many troubles, both political and social. There were doubtless faults on both sides. A Nonconformist, to a Churchman, seemed always on the defensive against something or other; a Churchman, to a Nonconformist, seemed always to think himself a member of a sort of Upper Ten. There were sometimes amusing incidents in the quarrel. A tactless Churchman once said to a Dissenting lady, when the Balfour scandals were at their height, "Of course, Balfour is a Dissenter." She answered, "No, he *pretends* to be one. No one, in order to seem pious, would pretend to be an Anglican." Another Dissenter, in a dispute of a similar kind, told his opponent

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he had no wish to be like a luckless publican, a member of a "tied" Church.

This had not always been the state of things. It was stronger from the sixties to the eighties, I think, than before or since (except, of course, during the Education quarrel of 1902). A movement in the Church, which in many respects had much to recommend it, aggravated the disease.

In the early Victorian age a good deal of friendliness prevailed between the Anglican clergy, who were for the most part Evangelicals or Latitudinarians, and the Dissenters. With the Methodists, who still maintained they were possibly Nonconformists but certainly not Dissenters, the feeling was often particularly cordial. I have heard of more than one clergyman, easy-going in temper, who welcomed the assistance of the Methodist minister: "This," said one, "relieved him of more work than a curate, and without expense." Another expressed his obligations by saying that, as conductor of the celestial train, he would accept any number of porters.

In the memory of people still living, the Methodist services were purposely fixed in many villages at times which did not interfere with mattins; and Methodists were quite willing to hear the imperfect Gospel in the morning, provided they could fill up that which was lacking at their own afternoon and evening services.

As for the Latitudinarians, they were perhaps still more tolerant. I have been told of rectors like

"Squarson King," who again and again took services with a surplice over his hunting-coat, and made them pleasantly short. It is said (with what truth I cannot say) that, knowing the Methodist ministers administered the Sacrament, he thought it a work of supererogation to administer it himself, and for years omitted it. When Christopher Wordsworth, however, became Bishop of the diocese, this laxity had to be reformed. Wordsworth was a High Churchman and a martin : All his clergy must have Holy Communion at least once a week. Squarson King therefore appeared at the altar-rail, along with another clergyman of the same kidney. But the door in the rail, through long disuse, was as firmly fixed as, it is said, the door at the Master of Trinity's pew was when Bentley was Master.<sup>1</sup> After several vain efforts to open it, the Squarson said to his colleague, "Well, Tom, there's nothing for it but to take the timber "; and cleared it with a flying leap as if he had been on horseback and the rail had been a five-barred gate.

With the growth of Tractarianism, the friendly feeling of which I have spoken gradually ceased.

<sup>1</sup> An enemy of Bentley tells the tale:

*Proceeding slow in solemn state,  
Forward he marches to his seat.  
But oh, the lock, long since disused.  
To admit the holy man refused.  
The verger tugs with fruitless pains.  
The rust invincible remains . . .  
The verger soon, with nimble bound,  
At once vaults o'er the wooden mound,  
And gives the door a furious knock,  
Which forced the disobedient lock.*

Dissenting ministers naturally resented being classed with laymen; and rash sayings of the new clergy came to their ears. "My parish is full of heathen, and, worse, Dissenters" was a typical sentence of some of the wilder Puseyites: and such sayings, repeated perhaps "with advantages," did untold harm. In a certain country parish lived a Congregational minister, whom we will call the Rev. Lewis Jones. It happened that a friend of his, on a walking-tour, passed through the village, and thought he would call on him. Chancing to meet the Vicar, he said, "Can you tell me where the Rev. Lewis Jones lives?" The Vicar drew himself haughtily up; he recognised only one reverend in the place. Pausing a moment to let the enormity of the stranger's crime sink fully in, he pointed with his finger to a house in the distance, and said in a tone of the deepest scorn, "*Jones lives there!*" This, when Mr. Jones, as was natural, heard it, did not make him more friendly to the Established Church. Forty years afterwards, when time had softened his feelings, he told me the story with a humorous twinkle. With all the good Tractarianism did, this mischief was unfortunately bound up; and the bitterness thus engendered has only recently died away.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FAMILY

ANTHROPOLOGISTS TELL US that the original unit of the human race was not the individual but the family. If so, the Victorian age, at least in Nonconformist and Evangelical Church circles, would seem to have retained a very primitive character; and, to judge from such novels as Charlotte Yonge's, the High Church party was, in this respect, hardly distinguishable from its rivals. I have already said something on this topic; but the family was to such a degree the basis of the society that I think it desirable to speak more at length. In the early Victorian age, at any rate, the Englishman's house was still his castle, with governor, châtelaine, and garrison; and, though it had no "moat defensive," it was self-contained, independent, and all but impregnable. The father was undisputed head, and his word ran like that of the captain on a ship. There might be occasional mutinies, and more than occasional grumbling; but as a rule it was a despotism, benevolent if the despot was of a kindly disposition, tyrannical if he was by nature given to tyranny.

It is a mark of tyranny that it has the power of concealing itself from the man who exercises it:

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the tyrant tends to think himself merely the president of a republic, or even a private citizen who, by his personal virtues, has attained authority. Even when he imagines himself ruler by divine right, he yet fancies that he is where he is by his own merits; and he does not conceive it possible that what he does can be considered tyrannical. So it may well have been with many fathers of families; in all seriousness they regarded themselves as the servants of their households; the chief servants, it is true, yet harbouring no aim but the good of the whole. It would have astonished the average father to learn that his appearance among his children caused depression and that his departure was a relief. He might restrain them, but the restraint was for their good. None the less, like the subjects of so many well-meaning monarchs, the children often hated their master, and longed for the time of their release.

That this picture is to a great extent an accurate one it is I think impossible to deny. Perhaps by that natural tendency to disparage the generation preceding one's own, I should be inclined to admit that it is almost exact for the forties or fifties. Readers of John Stuart Mill's autobiography will remember that Mill does not so much as mention his mother—she would appear to have counted for nothing; and the portrait of his father is certainly not altogether pleasing. Mill tells us, it is true, that the younger children "loved him tenderly"; but his own feeling was clearly that of fear,

improving into awe, but never rising to affection; and it was with obvious relief that he left home for his year with General Bentham in France. Macaulay's youth was happier. His father was not often at home, his mother was of a gentle and lovable disposition; and the children had chances of liberty which they took. But the religious atmosphere, though sincere and—for those whom it suited—cheerful enough, was not the sort for those who, like Macaulay himself, could not be made Evangelicals. Many other examples might be given which seem to show that the family life of the earlier half of the century could be, and often was, constrained or even gloomy.

A good deal of this character was retained into the sixties and seventies; and if I were disposed to confine my attention to certain homes I saw, or to certain aspects of many which on the whole were cheerful and pleasant, I could draw a very sombre picture. It would, for instance, be hard to exaggerate the deference still paid in some households to paterfamilias—a deference sometimes ludicrously out of proportion to his deserts. His comfort and his wishes came first: the underlying dogma was that, by giving his children life, however little he had given them besides, he had conferred on them so tremendous a privilege that they must accept anything whatever at his hands and be thankful. The argument was like that so often propounded by devotees of the hunt: the fox would not have lived at all but for his utility as a vehicle of sport; he must

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therefore not merely submit to be chased with hound and horn, but welcome the pursuit with relish, and conclude his existence with gratitude for being torn to pieces. "Honour thy father" was, except in numerical order, the first of the commandments. There were, it is true, cases of heretical children. I remember one rebellious youth, who told his father that he saw no reason to respect him *merely* for his paternity: he would respect him if he deserved respect, but not otherwise. The father was so utterly taken aback at this blasphemy that, though usually eloquent enough, he had not a word to say.

On the wife he had conferred an only slightly inferior benefit: he had wedded her, and given her the status of a matron. In return for this, he expected, and usually received, the submission which the tamed Katharina gave to the victorious Petruccio; her hand was "placed beneath her husband's foot." That delegated power over her children which she was graciously allowed to exercise was used to strengthen his authority. She gave the predominant partner unstinted support. "No noise; father wants to rest," was a common injunction. "Eat up the fat," she would say; and if she detected a surreptitious glance at the paternal plate she would add, "But that is father"—and the case was decided. Everything she had was his; the "subjection of women" was complete, and—as a religious obligation—was not disputed. Little change had come about since Boswell said to Mrs. Knowles,



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who ventured to hope that women might some day be the equals of men, "Why, madam, *we* might as soon expect to equal the angels." I scarcely ever, in my early youth, heard any objection raised by women against the Miltonic maxim, "He for God only, she for God in him." The doctrine was scriptural, beyond appeal; and it was carried out to the utmost extent in action. Some who cannot recall those days in England may have observed more recent examples in German households, where the submission of the frau has often reminded me of the state of affairs I saw here fifty years since. Rarely indeed did the wife venture on the tiniest self-assertion, and then only with a sense of sin. One woman I knew well, who brought her husband some thousands of pounds, and saw it all thrown away in reckless speculation, but never, by word, tone, or look, showed the slightest resentment. When, finally, the grand piano which her father had given her as a wedding present was sold up with the rest of the property, she *did* utter a word of complaint—but not to her husband. She would as soon have been caught leaning against the back of her chair as seem to dispute the man's right to do what he would with "his own."

Why women with an independence should have been willing, nay eager, to exchange the comparative freedom of maidenhood for this slavery is a mystery; and what there was to boast of in wedlock is hard to see. Readers of Susan Ferrier's *Inheritance* will recall the fun which that lively and genial

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spinster makes of the lady who is always pluming herself on her shackled state—"And me a married woman!" Susan must often have heard the phrase, and must have laughed at it as she reflected how many humiliations she herself escaped. But the brag continued to be uttered, perhaps as the sole consolation for the drudgery of unpaid menial household service, and for the grovelling subservience which was the necessary price for a not utterly intolerable existence.

There were, of course, many women who, unable to rely on law or force, used the weapons of the defenceless, and ruled their husbands by flattery, cajolery, or systematic nagging. There were Mrs. Caudles in real life, who gained their way as waters make a passage through a barrier—by persistent effort; and there were others who, by dexterous management, contrived to make their husbands think they were ruling when they were being ruled. In their small sphere they were like the great Whig ladies of the fifties, who, with no votes, influenced politics by smiles, salons, and blandishments.

When the tyranny and resulting hatred on both sides became intolerable, it had yet to be borne. Divorce, or even separation *a mensa et toro*, was next to impossible of attainment. You had taken your partner for better for worse, and the bond was practically indissoluble. Nothing could exceed the horror felt and expressed for any daring creature who fled from servitude: she had broken the laws of God and man. A story I read, with the title

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"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," enforced the moral with eloquent energy. The wife, though tormented beyond bearing, was in the wrong simply because she ran away from the torment. If ever an irregular union was ventured by some daring spirits, the censure became still more severe. I remember listening on a train journey to a long diatribe on George Eliot. The lecturer was certain, first, that Lewes ought never to have separated from a wife who would not stay with him, and secondly that George Eliot ought never to have consoled him by taking charge of his household and looking after his neglected children. "However," he added, "we ought not to judge her. The twenty years of remorse which she must have endured were a sufficient punishment." As for those who, by showing friendliness to the sinner, encouraged her in her fault, words failed even this most fluent speaker. I knew a minister, who believed himself a true follower of the Friend of publicans and sinners, and yet broke off all intercourse with another minister on hearing he had called on a man in the exact position of George Henry Lewes.

There was *one* way out which I fear was sometimes taken, though from its very nature its prevalence cannot be measured. A doctor once told me that he did not believe there was a single medical practitioner in London, of twenty years' standing, who had not serious reason to believe that wives in his practice had poisoned their husbands or husbands their wives; but in the vast majority of cases the

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doctors could not utter their suspicions. Unless the crime was brought fully home, and the criminal actually convicted by due course of law, a medical attendant who should speak would be ruined; and even if that very dubious success was attained, he would have had to face obloquy, innuendo, and the bullyings of unscrupulous counsel in court. The example of Dr. Paterson, who unearthed the crimes of Pritchard, was not such as to encourage his confrères. The murder was proved to the hilt, and Paterson's action not only brought a villain to justice but probably prevented other murders, yet he had to stand all sorts of insinuations from the defending barrister, and ran great risk of losing his livelihood. It is a legal maxim that the proper aim of all counsel should be not to win their case but to discover the truth. No maxim is more often honoured in the breach.<sup>1</sup>

The doctor I have referred to told me of an episode in his own career which was illuminating. In this case he suspected the husband of poisoning the wife. After many sinister incidents, he said to the husband: "Your wife's illness is not running its natural course; the medicines are producing exactly the opposite effect to that I should expect." "That means," said the man, "that you are incompetent."

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, it is true, the judge throws his shield over the witness, but not often enough. On one occasion, in the eighties, when an obviously truthful witness had been battered into helpless confusion by a ferocious barrister, the judge—in my hearing—said to the bully, "Mr. So-and-so, I shall put your cross-examination of this witness to the jury as a strong point on the opposite side." But such cases are even now all too rare; and they were rarer still "sixty years since."

"If so," he replied, "call in another opinion; choose any physician of eminence you please, and if he says my treatment is wrong, I will retire from the case." The man's look was that of conscious guilt. Within a day or two he left the neighbourhood with his wife and family, and was lost to the doctor's knowledge, but was doubtless able to "call in another opinion" in his new place of abode. At any rate, as my friend ascertained by accident long after, the woman died in a very short time, though her disease was in itself very unlikely to be mortal.

The tendency, which has to-day perhaps gone too far, to forget the murdered and find excuses for the murderer, was much less visible fifty years ago than now. There were far fewer petitions for mercy: although even then there were signs of what some people regarded as sentimentality. Stephen, for example, in his *Criminal Law*, devoted some pages of his account of the trial of Palmer to this point. Taking Palmer as a type, he insisted that there are many human beings, perfectly sane, yet as dangerous as the most homicidal lunatic, who ought, when the chance comes, to be exterminated like wild beasts.

In the case of a certain woman whom I myself knew—wealthy, attractive, and good-looking—I have a fancy that the feeling which Stephen detested had a considerable influence. She was very strongly suspected in private circles of expediting her husband's death in an illegal manner. But, as I imagine, the people concerned felt that the

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husband's departure was a benefit to society, and that no good would be done by sending a better person after him; no steps, therefore, were taken. Their attitude was that of the Cornish jury when trying a man for wife-murder. "To hang him wouldn't bring the old girl back; and, besides, everybody was glad to be well rid of her."<sup>1</sup>

As I have hinted, the happiness or misery of a state of things like this depended on the personal character of the protagonists. An easy-going, patient, or submissive disposition would make things endurable which to people of another kind would have meant an inferno. Some wives might contrive to agree with Blackstone that the law of England gave English women a position which was the envy of the world, and might seek out, in their strange condition, the possibilities of power inherent in it. Others would make the best of a bad business, and some would find solace in the sense that they were carrying out the will of God. Yet others, with that optimism which was a marked feature of the time, would look forward to a good time coming, and would anticipate for their daughters a better fate than their own. This

<sup>1</sup> Matters were totally different in the case of Mrs. Bravo in 1876—which has been the basis of several novels. There was no real evidence against her, and the case never came to a trial. There were two inquests, both inconclusive. The unhappy woman not only, by the abominable system which still prevails, had to pay £10,000 to her defending lawyers, but was plagued with innumerable anonymous letters, and died shortly afterwards, it is supposed, of the anguish thus caused. The report of the second inquest, which lasted twenty-two days, filled pages every day in the papers, and as we have seen, when it ceased, the *Daily News* was accused by Tories of inventing the Bulgarian Atrocities to fill up the vacant space.

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proleptic bliss, derived from the contemplation of the happiness of later generations, has often been found—why, it is hard to see—to mitigate present suffering; and there were not wanting signs that, in the near or distant future, the good time might arrive. For the state of things I have described was, in the seventies and eighties, beginning to change. Both law and opinion—the former as usual lagging far behind the latter—were having their effect. The Married Women's Property Act did much more than give women the right to their own property: it gave them dignity in their own eyes. A solid income of no more than a hundred a year made them feel more independent, and more able to look on their husbands with equal eyes. Dim rumours of agitations for yet more independence began to penetrate even into the most servile households, and provoked strange questionings. Why should not the girls be educated as thoroughly, and as expensively, as the boys? Why should the mother be content to be a domestic slave when everybody knew that she had talents fitting her for better work? Why—but this was only whispered—should she be compelled to ruin her prospects and wear out her health by having a child every fifteen or eighteen months? It was hinted that there were ways of avoiding these recurring catastrophes. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant went so far as to talk of them openly. They were prosecuted, and dark innuendoes were uttered in the pulpit as to the "uncleanness" that inevitably accompanied

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atheism; but people began, none the less, surreptitiously to *think*, and the result was seen in the succeeding generations. A Head Master was questioned by his governors as to the decline in numbers at the school in the fifteen or twenty years of his tenure. He was a mathematician, and produced statistics. "I have been at the pains," said he, "of computing the number of children among our clientèle forty years since and now, and I find that though our actual numbers have fallen considerably, the *proportion* we take is much higher." As a matter of fact, the average family at the earlier date was between six and seven; at the later it was between three and four. These families belonged to the poorer professional classes. The increase in comfort represented by the change can be imagined. It meant the difference between grinding poverty and tolerable ease. For the mothers it meant health instead of constant weakness and lassitude.

And, for the times which fall within my own memory, a slight change of emphasis, or a selection of the right kind of examples, might alter the picture I have drawn beyond recognition. There were innumerable families in which, while the theory was what I have given, in practice it was almost entirely forgotten. Things worked so well that there was virtually nothing to complain of. There was such an affection between husband and wife, and such a pleasant and easy system of give and take, that I doubt whether any thought of inferiority or superiority arose. The father never showed jealousy if the



mother asserted authority, and the children, never observing any conflict of power, assumed naturally that if one parent was absent, what the present one said the other would have said if there, and when they were together, each tacitly supported the other. The large families, again, were in a way an actual help to the mother. The elder children took half the work off her shoulders, and brought up the younger in the way they should go. I have known families of six or seven, harmoniously and skilfully conducted, in which the mother rarely appeared except as a kind of welcome and honoured guest, and in which the father, coming in at evening from his work, found obvious refreshment in the company of his children, joining in their games as if he were a boy again, or helping them in their lessons with a humorous remark that they must not mind if, having left school so long, he made a fair number of mistakes. Such a description as Stanley gives of Dr. Arnold's household, with its "almost awful" harmony, I could easily parallel from what I have often seen myself. Arnold going steadily on with his edition of *Thucydides*, while the children played around him in the study, and gladly suffering any interruption, is, *mutatis mutandis*, a scene which my memory often recalls. The despotism, in cases like these, was most assuredly veiled.

There was, of course, little of the familiar language in which modern children indulge, as if the parents were but schoolmates, to be addressed in the least dignified slang that can be found. One

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rarely heard even such words as "pater," "mater," "governor," and still more rarely such terms as are nowadays so common. In the most easy moments of intercourse, and in the most frivolous or boisterous games, respect both in word and in tone was always maintained; it had, I imagine, been so steadily inculcated from babyhood onwards that it was quite spontaneous and unconscious. It most certainly implied no less affection than the manners now prevalent.

It may be well to say a few words about an institution which is now almost entirely extinct; but the memories of which, pleasant or unpleasant, seem to be particularly keen in the minds of those who took part in it. Family prayers, both in the morning and in the evening, were still regular, and nothing was allowed to stand in their way. But they were beginning to be both fewer and shorter. The extreme abundance of the forties was being modified, as, indeed, we learnt from a pious biography on our library shelves, of which the following sentence lingers in my memory: "December 31. The end of a happy year: 1,095 times have I prayed with my family, 1,095 times in private, with most blessed results." (It was evidently not a leap-year.) This book had a curious fate, which may remind classical scholars of the story of the ring of Polycrates. Becoming finally sick of the sight of it, we took it to a second-hand bookstall, and sold it for threepence, a transaction which we regarded as good business. What was our amazement when, a few weeks later,

a friend presented us with the identical volume, which he said he had seen on the stall, and which he thought our family would thoroughly appreciate. As with Polycrates, the recovery of the treasure seems to have betokened ill-fortune, for shortly afterwards one of those meddlesome pietists, who made an impression totally out of proportion to their numbers, turned up in our house. For some reason he picked me out as a proper object of his ministrations. "How often do you pray?" said he. I did not know what right he had to ask, but thought I had better answer. "Twice," I said, "once after getting up and once at bedtime." "Look in the Bible," he replied, "and see if you can find a single case of a man who prayed only twice a day." I did not tell him there were more examples of people who had probably not prayed at all. I still feel a slight annoyance, mingled with amusement, as I recall this scene; but such men, fortunately, very rarely came my way. If such a man came often in the way of others I can understand their feelings as to Victorian Evangelicalism.

Whatever may have been the case with private devotions, in the case of family prayers the three times a day had by my own time been reduced to two, and the service never—unless we had a particularly long-winded parsonic visitor—lasted more than five or six minutes: no large slice out of twenty-four hours. And it was treated perfectly simply, without the slightest suggestion of superfine piety. Religion was not an alien patch of cloth

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on the garment of life, but an integral part of a seamless coat; you knelt and prayed as naturally as you ate and drank. With precisely the same simplicity a minister, when making his pastoral visits, would close them with "a word of prayer," invoking a blessing on the house and its inmates. This, if not sincere, would be intolerable; if done as I have seen it often done, it was a beautiful symbol. And so with the bi-diurnal worship at home.

Once, it is true, even in my time, the length of the family prayers rivalled that of the spacious Puritan days. But the circumstances were exceptional. A kindly minister, staying at a certain house, discovered that the only time in which the servants could get their breakfast was the few minutes of family prayer. "They shall have enough time this morning," said he to himself, and read the whole 119th Psalm.

I do not deny that this worship, like every regular ceremony, tended to become a mere formality, and was in some cases hurried through in a mechanical fashion. I remember a blasphemous young fellow who determined to prove that the whole thing meant nothing. "Look at old Mrs. So-and-so," said he; "she puts on a face of rapture when she does not understand a single word." Accordingly, when next he took tea with the old lady, he offered to read the lesson, selected the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and with the utmost gravity read every other verse. It was true that the lady's face bore the usual rapt expression, and the

young man was naturally triumphant; but I cannot see that he had proved his point. A service, however unintelligible, which produced this serenity, was worth holding. At the same time, I admit that many people would have been unable, a second after rising from their knees, to recall a single word. The same might be said of grace before meat. I have known a father of a family utter the formula before the porridge, and repeat it before the bacon and eggs. The thing had become like the winding up of a watch—done without thinking. But even so, there was nothing that can fairly be called hypocrisy. Unless you agree with Kant, and demand that every action of every day must be performed from a rigid sense of duty, you must admit that a habit may be good even though it has ceased to be conscious. One does not, when meeting a man in a train, deliberately decide not to murder him because murder is wrong. Not-murdering has, in the case of most of us, become so fixed a habit that we abstain from homicide without thinking about the matter at all. Grace before meat may be good even when, like breathing, it is reflex.

Though the actual prayers showed often a certain monotony, and were hardly more than a cento of Biblical or other phrases,<sup>1</sup> yet the little services had one great advantage, quite apart from the “blessed

<sup>1</sup> There was one old widow lady whose prayers, nominally extempore, were invariably adorned by one sentence—“Could I but pluck a feather from the wing of divine grace, then would I fly away and be at rest.” This sounded fairly well on the first occasion, but was less effective on the tenth repetition.

results " which they unquestionably produced for many. The families attained a mastery of Bible history and phraseology which is sadly lacking in families of similar social position to-day—a lack which means a great literary loss.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to appreciate great English writers like Milton, Dryden, Ruskin, or Macaulay without such a knowledge; and there is something to be said for the rote-learning of long passages to which Ruskin was far from the only Nonconformist child to be constrained by his parents. It was the habit in many households of my acquaintance to variegate family prayers on Sunday mornings with the "capping" of Scriptural verses—a game which was supposed to be quite consistent with the strictest Sabbatarianism—as it was permissible to play with Noah's Ark, or to learn your Monday's Scripture lesson, on Sunday afternoon. Work, however hard, and play, however pleasant, were "all right" as long as they had some Scriptural connection.

The transition from Scripture reading to games is less abrupt than it may seem. The prophet, picturing a perfected Jerusalem, marks as one of the chief signs of its prosperity that it will be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The little Jerusalems of my Evangelical youth were far from perfect; but *this* aspect of the Holy City was very

<sup>1</sup> As I have observed elsewhere, I have tested this statement. I once read to a class of pupil-teachers a dozen passages in Macaulay in each of which there was a Biblical quotation. Not one of them was recognised, and some were not even seen to be quotations at all. One of the most forceful of writers thus became feeble.

visible in them. One of the pleasantest memories of survivors of those times must be of the family games, outdoor in summer and indoor in winter. Some of these games were quiet, like "Word-making and Word-taking," "Happy Families," or the then fashionable "Spelling Bees"; others were rough and ready, but were never checked by authority. Many were invented by ourselves. One was particularly popular—a form of table-cricket. Here a domino was the wicket, a marble the ball, and eleven chessmen the fieldsmen. Any time a ball hit a chessman, "the striker was out"—such a thing as a missed catch being unknown. Every match was carefully scored, and the averages of both batsmen and bowlers (who "changed ends" every over) were rigidly kept. These matches, played strictly according to rule, sometimes went on through the whole Christmas vacation, and were miniature reproductions of most of the county championship games. On the last day, a match between England and Australia was played, the English team being chosen on a system of rigid impartiality. The four bowlers with the lowest averages, the six batsmen with the highest, and the best wicketkeeper were selected in total disregard of their reputations. It would be hard to exaggerate the pleasure we got out of these simple games. I should doubt whether there were any homes in England where games were more constantly played, or played with more enthusiasm, than in many of these supposed haunts of sullenness and gloom.

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To believe that, because those households knew little of the outside entertainments which are now so abundant, they therefore did not know how to amuse themselves, would be like fancying that a poor child with a rag doll is less absorbed in her play than a princess with a dozen life-like works of art. A little imagination transforms the rags into human beings; and a little ingenuity or cleverness made these homes into abodes of pleasure. Particularly was this the case when the family had a modicum of musical talent. My own was fortunate enough to have at least one member with a very considerable musical gift; and the amount of enjoyment thus caused can hardly be estimated. I can trace, in my mind, our gradual advance from songs like "Far Away," (by Miss M. Lindsay,) "He Wipes the Tear from Every Eye," "What are the Wild Waves Saying," and others of like kind, to songs, duets, and small concertos of a different order. Mendelssohn, whom a biographical dictionary of the sixties calls "unquestionably the greatest musician of the century," was a very early favourite; but it was not long before he gave way to Beethoven. Handel, of course, as sacred, we were allowed, and encouraged, to hear performed in public; and an organ-recital, even though not in church, was supposed to have a religious tendency. It was on this account that we were permitted to attend recitals by W. T. Best in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Every such experience widened our musical intelligence. The entertainments of the German Reeds,



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with the inimitable Corney Grain as the chief entertainer, came shortly afterwards; and next came George Grossmith. But if we could hear Grossmith by himself, we could also hear him as one of a group; and we thus penetrated into the enchanted land of Gilbert and Sullivan. Gilbert's rule was known, that in these operas no man must act a woman's part, and no woman a man's. Clergymen and ministers could therefore not only go to the Savoy themselves, but take their wives and children. We heard, with no sense of sin, practically every one of the series from *Pinafore* to the *Mikado*; and all these were performed, in our modest fashion, at home. I knew one youth who could play and sing, without the score, every single song, within or beyond his compass, in every one of the operas; and I think we ourselves were not far behind him. The isolated ballads of Sullivan, and not merely the *Lost Chord*, were equally well known: and those of Maude Valerie White, which I think would satisfy the exacting taste even of the present day, were a lasting source of pleasure. It would be impossible for me to name a tenth of the compositions, of every kind, which we knew and enjoyed. We saw the rise, the grand climacteric, and the decline of Gounod; we passed through the earlier and lighter phase of Verdi till we emerged in *Otello* and *Falstaff*; we heard the Carl Rosa performances of *Carmen* and *Mignon*; and we were for a time, but only for a time, enchanted with *Cavalleria Rusticana*. To hear such music, and to learn to choose the good and

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refuse the evil, was no bad musical education. But even more educative than to hear the professionals was to try to perform by ourselves. The wireless has its disadvantages.

Musical talent, like the wind, blows where it listeth, and I have seen some examples of it in unexpected places. I knew well a humble tradesman, who had never been taught a single note, but somehow had contrived as a boy of six or eight to play the flageolet, the banjo, and the concertina. Later, when able to afford it, he purchased a harmonium and a cheap violin. On these he produced very fair imitations of any air he happened to hear. "That was a very good tune we had in chapel to-day," he said to me once; "I hadn't heard it before." And he sat down to his instrument and played it over, managing to get the harmonies. "That's a good chord; I wonder what it is"—and he looked it up in his copy of Stainer's *Harmony*. To him, with his few opportunities, music opened the door into a world of culture otherwise closed. Had Gray heard him, he might have added a stanza to the "Elegy."

Nor, among these amusements, must we forget that not only was reading encouraged, but, in many houses, writing was constantly practised and duly criticised. In several households of my acquaintance a family magazine was "published," with editorial, stories, essays, verse, and a fun-corner—this last, to-day, less amusing than the rest. When, in later times, I came to read the story of the Brontës, I was interested to see how closely parallel, except

perhaps in the merit of the performances, was the life of the children in the Haworth parsonage to what I remembered in Nonconformist manses; and the Gatty household, out of which came, in due course, *Parables from Nature* and *Jackanapes*, was curiously similar. The discipline was sometimes severe, for boys to whom mathematics and science were more congenial than literature were expected to contribute their quota of prose and verse exactly like the rest, and the results of the pressure were sometimes remarkable. I still retain in my memory the plots of many of the stories and the actual words of many of the poems. Naturally enough, the stories and the style were imitative. The adventure tales were modelled on Kingston or Ballantyne, one in fact being nothing but *Gascoyne* with the names altered. The *John Wesley, a Pirate Tale*, was, however, fairly original. A missionary, going out to India in the good ship *John Wesley*, arriving in the Bay of Bengal, suddenly decided to change his profession for the more lucrative one of piracy. The passengers and crew were only too willing to assist; the missionary was elected captain, and the captain became, without grumbling, first mate. Falling in with another ship, the *General Booth*, they soon persuaded its occupants to join them in their designs, and the two vessels, hoisting the skull and crossbones in place of their former ensigns, soon became the terror of the Indian seas. Unluckily, like *Edwin Drood* and *Weir of Hermiston*, the story remained unfinished, and the dénouement is a problem for conjecture. Another



THE AUTHOR AT THE AGE OF TEN WHEN HE WROTE THE  
STORY OF THE SACHEM



story dealt with a pre-Columbian discovery of America. An English ship, duly provided, like Anson's *Centurion*, with a chaplain, was wrecked on the coast of Maine. The crew formed an alliance with an Indian tribe, the sachem of which proved to be a man of honour and ability. (Difficulties of language troubled the authors no more than they did the poet of the "Odyssey.") The sailors, grateful for the hospitality shown them, assisted the sachem in his wars with the Cloves, a neighbouring tribe. Alas, in one of the battles the noble chief was mortally wounded, and the chaplain attended him in his dying moments. But how to get him to heaven? These events occurred before the days of Luther, and salvation was as impossible for a Catholic as for a heathen. To leave the chief to his native superstitions was fatal; to convert him to Romanism perhaps more so. After much perplexity a solution was found. The sachem faded away so quickly that the chaplain had time only to initiate him into the elementary truths of Christianity, undiluted by the heretical accretions of Papistical theologians. He breathed his last in simple faith, escaping a terrible doom by a few critical moments: the priest had everything prepared for the irreparable disaster.

For a short time this magazine took on the character of a newspaper. The Tichborne case, during six years, had been splitting families and sundering friendships. For seventy months every fat boy in every school had been nicknamed "Tich";

and the English synonym for " never " was " When the Tichborne case is over." But now it was drawing to an end; and people's interest was keener than ever. There was always a chance of an outburst from Dr. Kenealy, and always the certainty of something witty from Hawkins. Even children pored over the interminable columns. To a family like ours the inspiration was irresistible. We must have a trial of our own, and our own reporter to record its progress. Accordingly, into the magazine went the " Fitzroy case," shorter but to us more fascinating than the great prosecution itself. After a while we wearied of it; the judge's summing up was boldly omitted, and our claimant was, without the formality of a verdict, sentenced to penal servitude. Some months later, the Lord Chief Justice of England followed our example. But the case did not end there. Kenealy stood for Stoke as a Sir Rogerite pure and simple, and won the seat with ease. Banners were still carried about inscribed " Can a Mother Forget her Child ? ", and people still argued whether a well-educated young man could, or could not, be so badly upset by a shipwreck as to translate *Laus Deo Semper* " The laws of God for ever ". It is said that there are, in 1936, a few Tichbornites surviving.

To return to the magazine, which, with the cessation of the Fitzroy case, resumed its more literary character. Essays and verses again had their chance, and " fun corners " reappeared. As for these last, a tragic incident is associated with at least one of

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them. To this, every member of the family contributed five puzzles or riddles, and a prize was offered for the one who guessed the greatest number. One riddle was insoluble; its author, having guessed the answers to all the others, was declared the victor: for even the most successful of his competitors had failed with that riddle. When, however, he was asked to declare the answer, he announced that he had forgotten it—it was so ingenious that it eluded even its maker. Nor, from that day to this, has anyone lit on the solution. I repeat it here, for my readers to exercise their skill. “Why is an insect in treacle like a negro in Cuba?” I am happy to say that the winner shared the prize—a bottle of boiled sweets.

Some years later, the bound volumes of this magazine disappeared. I would rather recover them than the lost decades of Livy: and to see a certain poem on the Beauties of England would please me more than to unearth another lyric of Sappho.



## CHAPTER IX

### SCHOOL

LET ME BEGIN THIS CHAPTER, as some of the Victorian histories of England used to begin, with William the Conqueror. Having seen what a nuisance he himself was to his nominal suzerain the King of France, he determined that none of his great feudatories should play the same trick on *him*. Accordingly, when he gave them large estates, he took care that they should be divided into many parts, with wide spaces between them. A man might have a castle at Bridgnorth and another in Sussex; it was thus not easy for him to get his whole force together. How wise a plan this was, appeared clearly in the Wars of the Roses, when the Nevilles, by a series of lucky marriages, could unite their scattered estates, and became "King-Makers."

William had, however, to make exceptions. He had to protect the Borders. The Earl of Chester must be strong, or the Welsh would be dangerous. There must be a powerful Earl of Kent, to defend the Channel ports from the French; and there must be a barrier in Durham, as nearly impregnable as possible, to check the "coursing snatchers" as well as the "main intendment" of the Scots. There was a real risk in this. The Lords Marchers often *allied*

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themselves with the Welsh Princes instead of opposing them: and in Stephen's reign the Earl of Chester actually made himself for a time ruler of the North, and issued proclamations from "our castle of Scarborough." But the risk had to be run. William made it as slender as possible. He gave, for example, the Earldom of Kent to his brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux, and the real Count Palatine of Durham was its Bishop. Bishops, at any rate, could not found dynasties, or contract lucrative marriages.

In England—one of its many likenesses to China—old things survive when their original purpose has been forgotten. The Earls of Chester, after being a plague both to Wales and to England, luckily died out; and the English kings therefore made their eldest sons Earls of Chester: and the eldest son of the King of England is thus Earl of Chester to this day—and that even before he is made Prince of Wales. As for the Bishop of Durham, he retained his enormous estates long after the Scots had ceased to be a peril; and he was popularly known as the Prince-Bishop. Even now he is the fifth prelate in the realm, and *ipso facto* a member of the House of Lords.

One of the last of the Prince-Bishops was Shute Barrington, Count Palatine and Custos Rotulorum, who held the see from 1791 to his death in 1826. He thought that something of public value ought to be done with his superfluous resources: and decided that there was no better use for them than the promotion of education. Accordingly, he founded a number of schools in the North of England—the

children to be taught on the sound principles of Wellington and Archbishop Moore, reading, writing, the Four Rules, and the essential doctrines of the Church of England. The school-houses were provided free, and the masters were given a small sum (I believe not more than ten pounds per annum) which they were to supplement as they best could.

My father attended one of these schools from the age of six to the maturity of ten or eleven. The master, who was a dour and awe-inspiring veteran, insisted on work, but was still more insistent on his fees. On his desk, visible to all, were Mavor's *Spelling* (*not* the edition with Kate Greenaway's illustrations), an arithmetic (I think Cocker's), a cane, and a tea-cup. Into this tea-cup, as the prime ceremony of the ritual, every pupil, immediately on entrance, dropped a penny. As there were perhaps twenty scholars, the teacher thus augmented his income by about ten shillings a week. Like the postal officials of to-day, he was neither compelled to give change nor authorised to demand it.

Now, though this system compares in some respects unfavourably with that of to-day, it had its advantages. The teacher had passed through no training school, and his knowledge was not great. But what he did know he had to impart. The parents were determined not to allow their money to be wasted, and they saw to it that they got its full value. If the child's progress did not satisfy the father, he was withdrawn, and the master lost his weekly sixpence. I can only speak with certainty of my

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father's father; but, in his case, I know the supervision was rigid. He made no objection to the cane; but he watched to see if the three R's were forthcoming. As a result, my father gained a thorough acquaintance with the whole school curriculum; before he left, he could read with ease, spell as accurately as Mavor himself, parse like Lindley Murray, add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and reduce pounds to pence. He even knew then, what he forgot afterwards, the number of firkins in a kilderkin, the difference between a Flemish ell and an English one, and that five and a half yards make one rod, pole, or perch.

Such a primary school is not to be despised: and, be it noted, its strength lay in the two facts that it was voluntary and that it was paid for. The master knew he must do his work, or his income would decrease; the parents were not inclined to see their money go for nothing. They valued education because they paid for it, and they paid for it because they valued it. I am not sure that, to-day, what is got for nothing is not sometimes valued by parents at exactly the price it costs.

When I come down forty or fifty years to my own childhood, things had of course changed; but relics of the old chaos still survived. At four I went to a dame's school, which can have differed little from that described by Shenstone, except that it was in London, and the discipline mild to laxity. Young as we were, we were somewhat critical. "How do you spell *piano*, Miss Pinhorn?" asked a little girl.

"Look it up in the dictionary; you will remember it much better that way." As this was the invariable answer to similar requests, we suspected that spelling was not Miss Pinhorn's strong point. Somehow, however, perhaps taught by each other (for talking, though nominally forbidden, went on all day), we learnt the regulation amount. We objected none the less to the obvious fact that the highest place any of us could reach was never quite the top. By hook or by crook Miss Pinhorn's youngest sister Minnie was always first, though we never noticed that she answered more questions than the rest. There were, however, compensations. It was discovered that Miss Pinhorn's mother—who still, to our amazement, survived—was particularly fond of boys, and did not care for girls: this we could understand, if her idea of girls was formed from Minnie.<sup>1</sup> At the "break," then we used pretty constantly to go down to the kitchen, and rarely emerged without a slice of bread and jam. At the end of the half-year, also, there were delights. There was a concert, and every pupil received half an orange; Minnie, needless to say, having a whole one. The educational system here ought to have pleased Socrates; for it was mainly an affair of question and answer. The upper classes had Mangnall's *Questions*, the answers being expected to be given verbatim; the middle had *The Child's Guide to Knowledge*: the juniors were brought up on

<sup>1</sup> As in Dickens's day, the elder girls in this school rejoiced in the prefix "Miss." It marked a stage in their progress when, from plain "Eliza" or "Agnes," they were promoted to "Miss Brown."



THE TRUANT, BY WILLIAM WEBSTER



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a small paper-bound work, still more elementary. Such is the caprice of memory that I remember perfectly the first page of this manual.

"What is the name of this pretty book?"

"*Early Instruction.*"

"Why is it put into your hands?"

"To make me wiser and better."

"How will it make you wiser?"

"It will teach me many things which I did not before know."

"Very good; now will you tell me how bread is made?"

Alas, it is precisely at this point that my recollection fails. As too often, it has retained the useless and rejected the useful. I could wish that Miss Pinhorn had omitted the first three or four questions, and begun with that which dealt with the harmless and necessary art of baking. Still, I confess to some degree of gratitude to her, and to more admiration; for, as nearly as I can now calculate, she could hardly have been out of her teens when she undertook the task of imparting "early instruction"; and her sister, Miss Louisa, who looked after the "juniors" of three or four, was certainly not more than seventeen. Those were the days when Hesba Stretton's "Little Meg," aged ten, acted as mother to four younger sisters.<sup>1</sup> The Misses Pinhorn, like Meg, came of a precocious, determined, and adventurous stock. They had very little learning,

<sup>1</sup> Hesba Stretton's various books, *Jessica's First Prayer*, *Little Meg's Children*, and many others, were perhaps as popular stories as ever issued from the press.



but they turned what they had to good purpose.

Later, I was promoted to what would now be called a Preparatory School, for boys only, kept by a Doctor of Laws, who had received his degree from an American University. This school, as I look back on it, seems strange. The Head Master made no allowance for absence, whatever its cause. Ten marks were possible in every hour; if you were not there, you got none at all. This he used as an incitement to diligence. "Don't think," said he in a speech at the opening of the half, "that it's no use your working because you can never get above So-and-so. Remember, So-and-so may be ill, and every day he's away you can gain sixty marks on him." At the end of the half there was a "Speech Day," and the Head himself contributed to the entertainment. I still recall with pleasure his rendering of that once-celebrated song, "The Arab's Farewell to his Favourite Steed"—which I suppose is Caroline Norton's masterpiece.

Strange as it may seem, though, or possibly because, I was left mainly to myself in this school, I learnt much. I was permitted to choose my own classics—we were not pestered with public examinations—and I went through several books of Virgil, one of Homer, and much of Xenophon, not perhaps in a scholarly fashion, but so as, in some degree, to appreciate them as literature, and not as mere excuses for lessons in accidence and syntax. Two, or sometimes three, forms were taken in one room; this had the curious advantage that, as a good deal

of noise was in any case inevitable, the Doctor made no objection to a certain amount of conversation. I was in a class of two with another boy much older than myself. He was lame, and as he said had the luck not to be able to waste his time on games. With him I read my Latin and Greek, and, when we tired of this, he imparted to me some of his very considerable knowledge of English writers. He was a devotee of Macaulay, Goldsmith, Byron, and Scott, and could recite long passages of their verse by heart. These are not now reckoned among the great poets, if indeed among poets at all; but they are at any rate a good introduction to poetry. Among this lad's special favourites were Byron's satires, such as *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. This is a crude enough performance; but, written as it was by a youth scarcely out of his teens, it is precisely adapted to the taste of boys. I often think of this lad with gratitude: but, as is so often the case with school friends, we parted and never saw or heard of each other again. Nor am I ungrateful to the Doctor himself. In addition to taking a class in part-singing, he gave my friend and me a weekly lesson in the Greek Testament, thus starting an interest which has only strengthened with the years. Peace to his memory! The school did not prosper, and he was often anxious about the future; but he married a rich widow, who was in the first instance attracted to him by the benefit her son had derived from his tuition. This, I should imagine, is a unique event in the history of pedagogy.

Such scholastic institutions as Miss Pinhorn's and the Doctor's I should regard as not abnormal for the time; but my succeeding experiences were, I think, quite unusual, and are not to be taken as in any sense typical of Victorian education; for in some respects they would have been as hard to parallel in the eighties as fifty years later. The school to which I had good fortune to go next was small—only a hundred and forty boys; but it was really larger than Charterhouse or even Eton, for those so-called single foundations, in actual fact, are multiple, and include many almost independent schools under one name. They are at best federal, not unitary, and the boys in the different houses not only do not know one another but are, in certain cases, not permitted to do so. With us, things were entirely otherwise; every boy knew every other. All were under one roof; all met in the same hall for meals. If ever we were inclined to feel humble because of our smallness, a wise youth would put forward the consideration that only the few could be truly select; a school of a thousand was *ipso facto* ten times less select than one of a hundred, as it is more distinguished to be a member of a Cabinet of a dozen than to be admitted into one of twenty-four. But as a rule this question never arose; we were there, and we were proud to be there. We thought our Head Master fully as great as Dr. Arnold; and our school fully as good as Rugby.

All of us were poor, and all of us knew that on our diligence in work depended our future; this

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had been driven into us in our homes and was held constantly before us at school. Whether destined for business or for a profession, we all alike must "mind our book." The Head Master, indeed, though a devotee of the classics,<sup>1</sup> and inclined to dwell on the inferiority of the "Barbarians," that is the Modern Side, to the "Greeks," or the classical, never failed to insist that a good business man was not a whit inferior to the greatest scholar. But, he also added, scholarship was no hindrance, but rather a help, to success in business, and he used to point, among other examples, to the career of Spottiswoode, a great physicist and President of the Royal Society, yet also head of a distinguished printing-firm. Whether Greek or Barbarian, therefore, you must work at your Latin and at your Mathematics. His advice, which was by no means given only in words, was for the most part followed. All the boys, with the rarest possible exceptions, worked, and worked hard; and, what is even more important, they taught each other. A boy brought up in France expected to be asked to give help in French, and he willingly gave it: a good mathematician explained the Binomial to his less gifted friends. A tradition of hard work could almost be felt in the school, and success in the past was expected to breed success in the present. So-and-so, the year before, had been first

<sup>1</sup> He was, indeed, such an advocate of Greek that he refused to apply the term "scholar" to Carlyle, despite his knowledge of German and history. A man who could not construe a page of Xenophon without a dictionary did not deserve so noble a title.

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in a public examination; he passed his notes down to you, with the hope that you would follow his example. Two years before, five boys had gone in for scholarships at Cambridge, and all had gained them; this was held up as a standard and a stimulus to you to go and do likewise. The boys indeed required no stimulus; it would have been well if they had been encouraged occasionally to unstring the bow. There was, it is to be feared, an almost unhealthy rivalry; the attempt to win and retain your place in form was often too violent, and I have known boys who kept the most rigid accounts of their marks from day to day, noting how a loss in one subject might be counterbalanced by a gain in another. Still worse was it when an examination was pending. The atmosphere was tense; boys would suddenly be seized, perhaps in the middle of a half-holiday, with the fear that they had forgotten a proposition or a passage in Virgil, and would rush back to revive the knowledge. We always got up at half-past six, winter and summer; but in the few weeks before an examination boys would rise at five; and I recall how, when it was discovered that I could wake at will at any hour I chose, I was engaged by a Sixth Form boy to pull him out of bed at half-past four every morning. Like Edgar Allan Poe, "distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December." I have been vividly reminded of these experiences when reading the Abbé Dimnet's account of his schooldays at Cambrai, which were remarkably similar to mine.

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Both schools were schools of work; but both had one advantage over some other working-schools of the time. There was none of the ruinous night-work which the boys of St. Paul's or the City of London were compelled to do. Every boy in both schools was in bed by half-past nine.

Even the Abbé's school, however, can hardly have been more remarkable than mine. I doubt whether a greater number of really able boys was ever gathered together in so small a space. Among the twenty or thirty with whom I was brought into more or less close association, one who could foretell the future would have seen two Fellows of the Royal Society, three Fellows of Trinity, Cambridge, four or five Fellows of other Colleges, five or six Professors of various subjects, some eminent Head Masters, and several distinguished doctors, lawyers, or educationists. Many of them have written books or treatises of permanent value; one or two, indeed, are only not famous because their "fit audience" is inevitably few: they are stars visible only through five or six of the best telescopes. Nor did it always take an inspired prophet to foretell the coming glory. A lad of eighteen had just won a Cambridge scholarship. Being beaten in a school test by a boy not yet fourteen, he said to his fellow-prefects, "That kid will be Senior Wrangler"; and "that kid" not only did become Senior Wrangler, but in the opinion of many good judges was among the very ablest mathematicians of his time.

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It is hard to exaggerate the mental stimulus given even to quite ordinary minds by constant association with boys like these: and I have never ceased to be grateful to the fortune which threw me among them. One tried to follow them, *non passibus aequis*; and I remember the glow of pride I felt when the Head Master told me I was *proximus, sed longo intervallo*, to one of the most talented among them. It was indeed a compliment. Though the interval grew wider and wider, it was worth while to try to bridge it.

There was no cheating in this school—or rather there was one case in my time, with which the boys themselves dealt drastically and finally. The trust was absolute, and it was not abused. Even in the midst of an examination, the candidates were let out at the eleven o'clock "break," and never so much as discussed the questions. So far did this feeling go, that I knew a boy who, overhearing his neighbour mutter, half-unconsciously, the answer to a sum, refused to do it, lest he should be tempted to alter it if he got it wrong. I have been reminded of this in reading Dr. Bliss Perry's account of Princeton in Woodrow Wilson's time.<sup>1</sup> Wilson was, as is well known, fond of phrases, and before an examination he made the students "pledge their honour as gentlemen" to act fairly. There were *two* violations in Dr. Perry's time. "One occurred in one of my own courses. I had left the room as soon as the papers were distributed,

<sup>1</sup> *And Gladly Teach* (Houghton Mifflin), p. 131.

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and there were no 'proctors.' But a boy (or, as we should say in England, a 'man') was seen to cheat, was reported by his classmates to the undergraduate honour committee, and told to leave Princeton that afternoon. I knew nothing about it, until the Dean announced at the next faculty meeting that Mr. X, on the recommendation of the student committee, had severed his connection with the college." Our own action, on the one similar occasion I remember, was less severe but equally effective.

This conscientiousness led to an incident, the morality of which may be variously viewed. At a public examination, the Oxford Locals, no two boys of the same school were placed together. One of our boys, sitting next a boy from another school for an arithmetic paper, noticed that his neighbour was copying his answers. He therefore did the sums deliberately wrong, and when he had made certain that the cheat must be "ploughed," did them again correctly. He ran the risk, if the transaction caught the eye of the invigilator, of being regarded as an accessory; but he thought it fully worth while.

I think Dr. Perry right when he says that this trusting system is doomed to failure unless there is the requisite social solidarity. It worked, he says at many of the smaller American institutions as well as at Princeton; but the Harvard authorities, probably wisely, refused to try it at Harvard. "There are too many untouchables in every great



University, and you cannot send a boy to Coventry if he lives in Coventry already." But it worked, by virtue of a long-established tradition, in our school. The masters could leave us entirely to ourselves, and not a boy would alter his behaviour in the least.

I would not, however, fail to show the darker side of the picture. Far too much, as I have said, was made of mere position in form or in the examination lists. Looking back on this state of things, I am inclined to doubt the truth of the sentence I wrote in my first copy-book (after others beginning with A, B, C, and D) that "Emulation promotes improvement." My schoolfellows, I believe, would have worked, perhaps less hard at the time, but often with a better result in the long run, if there had been no marks at all. Some boys, and not always the least able, were tired of competition even before they left school, and in their University career, by a natural reaction, took things easily. Nor were they unique. It may be remembered that the same thing was noticed in some of Arnold's pupils. "Long before I left Rugby," said Arthur Clough, "I was sick of school rivalries and competitions"; and this was partially the cause of his comparative failure in the Oxford Schools. The same thing was remarked, at least by rival Head Masters, in some of the pupils of Walker of St. Paul's. Driven too hard at school, they took a rest at College. I knew some very remarkable cases of this kind, which might serve as a warning. One may suffice. A most brilliant boy was sent up

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from a London school to Oxford. "Look after him," wrote the Head; "he is the ablest boy I ever had." He took his scholarship with ease. Without idling during his college career, he had no further success: he took a "third" in Moderations and a "fourth" in the Finals—whereas, had he taken these examinations as a schoolboy he would have attained at least a second class. No sooner had he gone down than his old brilliancy returned—too late.

At our school the discipline was Spartan, but the reverse of severe. No prefect was permitted to touch a boy: indeed only once, and that in a case personal "check," did I see such a thing attempted. Had the prefect tried it as a punishment for disorder the whole dormitory would have combined against him; the bad mark, the authorised means, was there, and to that he must confine himself; and against even that there was an appeal. Corporal punishment was strictly reserved for the Head Master alone; and it was rarely inflicted. You might be on the "Black List" twice in the term with impunity; after the second offence the Head wrote to the boy's home saying that a third delinquency would mean the stick; and the parents, who regarded such a punishment as an almost indelible disgrace, were thus enlisted in the cause of order. Nine-tenths of the boys, or more, thus went through their whole school career without suffering this penalty. The Sixth Form was of course entirely exempt; and the Fifth was immune except in very grave cases. As a further tribute to their

dignity these two forms were always dismissed when an "execution" was to take place. During my last year there was but one of these scenes.

The savage cruelty, in fact, which prevailed in many of the great schools, then and much later, was to us unknown. The dormitories were large and open, and the fact that everybody, as I said, knew everybody else, made bullying almost impossible. I knew but one boy who tried it, in very mild mimicry of Tom Brown's Flashman, and he was easily suppressed; it was, in fact, possible to mollify him after the manner of Scheherazade with the Sultan, by telling him stories, or by giving him help in algebra. During my time a terrible tale of cruelty in one of the old Public Schools got into the papers; we read it with the horror and astonishment with which Englishmen read of Bolshevik or Nazi tyranny; such things could not happen *with us*.

One kind of tyranny, in especial, which now flourishes almost everywhere, I never cease to rejoice that I escaped. Compulsory games had not yet been introduced; you played cricket or football if you wished to do so, and I never saw the least sign of unpopularity if a boy desired to spend his leisure in other ways. Naturally, there were always boys enough to make up an eleven or a fifteen; but should you choose to absent yourself, nothing was said; nay, the most influential of the prefects were those who scarcely played at all. From the moment at which you were dismissed from the

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classroom you were free; and you utilised your freedom, preferably by taking long walks, to which indeed the beauty of the country invited you almost irresistibly. With the walking was combined talking. Two friends, on a half-holiday, would set forth for a tramp of twelve or fifteen miles, and talk the whole way, with the zest, if not with the inspiration, of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the Quantocks. There was nothing they did not discuss. I was lucky enough to have as my chief friend a boy who was afterwards to be Smith's prizeman and Fellow of Trinity at Cambridge; and it was his delight to pour out for my benefit his views of the Fourth Dimension, in which it would be possible to tie a knot on a stretched string, of Thomson and Tait's *Unseen Universe*, of the Vortex Theory. These ideas were doubtless crude enough, but they were absorbing. They did not, however, prevent us from diverging to the intricacies of heresies and schisms, to the latest views on the Pentateuch, or to Carlyle's conception of Past and Present; for we were both devotees of the Chelsea sage, who was then in the very zenith of his glory.

That the free hours *were* free, and not a mere euphemism for slavery to games, meant still more than the possibility of walking and talking. It meant further a chance of general reading, for which the schoolboys of to-day have such scanty opportunity. Of this chance most of us gladly availed ourselves. A boy of no great rank in the school—in fact he was pretty monotonously last in his form—devoted

himself to Shakespeare, and once astonished the Head Master with a quotation from *Timon of Athens*. Fortunately for him he had good sight; for his copy was that pernicious sixpenny edition issued by Mr. Dick; abominable paper and worse print. Another boy, having got hold of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, set his eyes a still more dangerous task. Being completely captured by the story, he could not rest, waited till the prefect was asleep, got out of bed, and read on by the light of the moon, which was luckily full. I still possess a list of the books read out of school by this boy. In one year there were a hundred and fifty, including the *Ring and the Book*, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, four volumes of Gibbon, and fourteen of De Quincey. It is a relief to find a little light literature, consisting of novels by George Eliot, *Les Misérables*, and—sad to relate—*East Lynne*.

But reading was not enough for these insatiable youths. A manuscript Journal, to which all the members of the Debating Society were expected to contribute, appeared without a break every fortnight for ten years—two full generations of schoolboys. To each number the editor prefixed a Leading Article, sometimes thirty pages in length, giving his opinion of every single paper; and it is hard to overestimate the value of these often uncompromising criticisms, which spared no flaw in either style, substance, or syntax. One of the masters, himself a distinguished author, had occasion once to read this Journal. Having finished

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a number, he went across to the Prefects' Room. "I want to tell you" he said, "how pleurably I have been struck by reading these papers, and especially by the goodness of the editor's remarks on them. He scarcely leaves any weakness unmarked, but he also never fails to draw attention to the strong points." As this master's literary ability was highly respected in the school, this praise was valued.

Who started this Journal I do not know; but I think it was inspired in the first instance by the knowledge that, at Eton, Canning had been the moving spirit of the *Microcosm* and Praed of the *Etonian*, and it was thought, too rashly, that what they had done we could do. Such magazines, of varying merit, are known to-day: but they are rare. The worship of games means that only boys ready to face a certain amount of odium will make the time for them. Even the masters yield to the spirit of the age, and too often do not disguise their preference of cricket to work. Punch's satiric picture of the Head Master, cane in hand, saying to a boy, "Work you need not unless you wish; play you must and shall," is hardly a caricature; and the permission to captains to beat a boy they regard as slack in the field is a common and crying scandal. Almost as bad as this is the custom of compelling the vulgar herd to watch the matches of the school teams, and to cheer the heroes into swaggering vanity and themselves into hoarseness. One is reminded of the "forced hallelujahs" in heaven which Mammon

thought hardly less painful than the infernal fires. It is appalling to reflect on the amount of hypocrisy that flourishes round the touch-line during a school football match. What is worst of all, perhaps, is the fact that in many cases it ceases to be hypocrisy. The infection of the mob-mind seizes on all but the most stubborn and independent spirits, and turns multitudes who were once immune into as fanatical idolaters as the rest. The picture drawn by Alec Waugh in *The Loom of Youth* is here exact. Not all boys can, like Stalky and Co., continue, for long, giving mere lip-service to the idol. I cannot think that in this respect at least the present age is an improvement on its predecessor.

The defence usually advanced for filling up the time of the boys in this fashion is that it keeps their minds from vicious thoughts, and that it is better for boys to talk all day of cricket than to whisper in corners of certain things. I do not think this excuse will hold water. Nothing will prevent some boys from doing and saying what they ought not: and my experience is that the athletes are at least as great offenders as the so-called "smugs." All I can say is that in my own schooldays the vice was invisible. I heard a good many vulgar words; a vile one never: and scarcely a boy was so much as suspected of corrupting another. At a later time, in a school where games were compulsory, the vice was almost universal, and the athletes were the leaders. "Why didn't the prefects stop it?" I said to my informant, one of the few who held out

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—he is now a distinguished Bishop. “The prefects !” he replied—“they were the worst”; and in that school the prefects were largely chosen from the best players of games, as being the most popular and influential.

That popularity, it is true, is often deceptive. A South African boy, known as “the Savage,” was far from being beloved in a certain school of my acquaintance. He was, however, a good cricketer, and in the final House Match made a large score himself, and dismissed the whole opposing side for a very small one. This secured him a momentary spell of glory. It happened that just then his father was in England, and visited the school; he was accordingly invited to the house-supper which celebrated the triumph. Every allusion to his son was punctuated with cheers; and the old gentleman was visibly affected. He was asked to speak. “I am touched to the heart,” he said, “by the way you have received my son’s name: it delights me that you hold him in such honour and affection. We in South Africa had a notion that you English boys regarded Colonials as savages”—here there was loud applause—“it is a great pleasure to find that is not so. I shall, when I return, be able to tell my boy’s mother how much you love him.” Little did he guess how transient an emotion the love was. Next term, in the football House Match, a slight and very natural slip of this same boy gave the victory to the other side. It was fortunate that the father was then seven thousand miles away. At a



smaller distance he might have heard the roar of execration.

To use the current phrase, this worship of games leads inevitably to the establishment of false "values," and to judgments ludicrously incorrect. I have known boys regarded as fools simply because they make mistakes in games, and some clever boys who have been so utterly cowed by the treatment they have received for inability to play up to standard as to run great risks of failing in important examinations.

I do not deny that there is something to be said for compulsory games as a preventive of "loafing": but the difficulty is that the genius is often mistaken for the loafer: and on the whole, in my opinion, the evil vastly outweighs the good. One thinks of Thirlwall's reply to Christopher Wordsworth, who, maintaining that attendance in chapel should be enforced on undergraduates, argued that it was a choice between compulsory religion and none. "The distinction," said Thirlwall, "is too nice for my comprehension." Similarly, a compulsory pleasure is hardly to be distinguished from a pain. A game should be an enjoyment; but it is not easy to enjoy yourself when you are told you will be beaten if you don't. The true game, in fact, in the sense of recreation, is almost extinct in England. Only the other day I read in the papers a stern pontifical censure of those benighted people who actually engage in lawn-tennis to amuse themselves: nor is it possible to read the sporting

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columns in the dailies without seeing that So-and-so "inexcusably" missed a catch, or that someone else cannot be forgiven for failing in front of goal. The tennis-player, it would seem, ought to be preparing himself for some visionary championship, or for defending the athletic honour of "England" against "France" or "Australia." This is in very truth to take one's pleasures sadly.

From this the Victorian age was to a great extent saved. Martin, in *Tom Brown*, could pursue his nature-study, if not without some unpopularity, without official punishment: the set, stern tennis-face was unknown in the eighties; and even the cricket-matches between England and Australia could be carried through without danger of exciting national antagonisms. Nor were school-matches miniature battles, with war-correspondents on the touch-line reporting every turn of fortune or fostering enmities.

In this respect, I think, Victorian boys, or at least many of them, had the advantage of their grandchildren. There was more liberty both of thought and of action. They were left to their own ideas of what they should enjoy, and they were not constrained, by a ruthless public opinion, to pretend to like what they detested. Much is said to-day of the tyranny of the Victorian parent, and of the dullness of the Victorian home. It may be that a future generation will have much to say of the tyranny of the Georgian school, and of the dullness of a life in which the boys were not permitted to amuse themselves in their own way.

## CHAPTER X

### EXAMINATIONS

THE MENTION OF SCHOOLS leads inevitably, by the Associative Law, to Examinations, which were in my youth almost the be-all and end-all of school life. They had not, perhaps, attained the devouring strength of to-day; but they were firmly established, and their merits were almost unquestioned. If, in fact, I were asked what, in my opinion, was one essential article of the Victorian faith, I should say it was "I believe in Examinations." Charles Trevelyan and his coadjutors had already made them a necessary needle's eye for entrance into the Civil Service; the College of Preceptors had set up a torture-chamber for children of twelve; the Oxford and Cambridge Locals, Junior and Senior, were in full vigour; and at the upper end of the scale the Triposes at one University and the Schools at the other were shaking hoary locks and mewing a mighty senility. Parents, meeting other parents, would announce the successes of their boys and would receive and return more or less sincere congratulations. Already apocope had worked its will, and "exam" and "Matric" were permitted, or even uttered, by the most punctilious people. Schoolmasters had already begun to publish the

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number of their passes, and clever boys were being pushed into the examination-hall before they reached their teens. Some business men were beginning to ask the question, now all but universal, "Has he matriculated?" It was fondly believed that, if this only went on in the right direction, we should be an educated people, or at least that the educated sheep could be distinguished from the illiterate goats by the simple badge of a certificate of success in a University test. Oxford even gave the title of Associate in Arts, or A.A., to those who had passed her Senior Locals. Examinations, in fact, were, to use a phrase then wearisomely common, "in the air."

So uncontested was their repute that women, jibbing at their happy immunity, were crying out to be examined like men, with almost as much persistence as, forty years later, they showed in demanding the Parliamentary vote. No windows, it is true, were smashed, and no Vice-Chancellors were assaulted, but the claim was vigorously pressed. Those were the days of "Miss Beale and Miss Buss," whose girls were sent in for the Locals as soon as ever it was thought they had a chance of passing. Those were also the days of Emily Davies and Mrs. Garrett Anderson, when Girton and Newnham were either founded or about to be founded. At last, in 1879, London University opened its degrees to women; and I well remember the excitement when it was learned that Mrs. Bryant, a colleague of Miss Buss at the North London Collegiate School for

Girls, had entered her name for the Matriculation.<sup>1</sup> She was shortly followed by Jane Harrison, a pupil of Miss Beale at the Ladies' College, Cheltenham (afterwards the famous author of *Prolegomena to Greek Religion*) and by Annie Besant, who needs no introduction.

It is interesting to recall the hopes that were centred in these examinations in those days. It was fully expected that they would act as an almost unerring means of discovering ability of every kind, and would guide the country in opening careers to the talents. These hopes cannot be better described than they were in the speech by Macaulay in favour of the system of Civil Service examinations; and people not usually sanguine agreed with Macaulay. The bad old days were over: impartiality would henceforth reign unhindered, and posts would go to the deserving.

This, I suppose, explains a phenomenon which was the object of much interest in my youth. When it came to my turn to go in for the London Matriculation, those of my seniors who had been through the ordeal said to me, "Be sure to look out for the Old Matricker." This was a grey-haired veteran who had been observed by successive generations of candidates, turning up regularly at Burlington House, and being as regularly "turned down"<sup>2</sup> by the examiners. It was confidently asserted that he had begun his Sisyphean task ten years before.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Bryant went straight through the prescribed course, and in a marvellously short time came out as the first woman Doctor of Science.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase for rejection was, I need not say, not then invented.

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Certain it is that he appeared duly in the examination-hall among my competitors, and that he was there again, still hopeful, half a year later. It was rumoured that he was a private schoolmaster, who hoped to increase his prestige, and with it the number of his pupils, by adding to his name the mystic symbol "B.A., Lond." All sorts of tales were invented about him. It was said he was one of those people whose brains are incapable of holding more than a precise and limited amount. In a fashion the exact converse of that of Portia's wooers, the moment he opened the door to admit one fact, another flew out.<sup>1</sup> Thus if, after failing in Latin in December, he paid special attention to it during the next six months, he forgot an equal quantity of mathematics, and in June failed in that. Others, without claiming first-hand information, assumed that he was—like Jebb, Jowett, Dean Stanley, or George Combe<sup>2</sup> the phrenologist—a man with an intellect of first-rate capacity in everything else, but utterly refusing to function when faced with the multiplication-table. Whatever the secret, it is certain that he continued to "follow the gleam," and kept up his biennial appearances for years. At last they ceased. I could never learn whether, because

<sup>1</sup> I submit this curious problem to the attention of psychologists. One of the most veracious gentlemen I ever knew assured me that he could never keep more than six Odes of Horace in his head at once. If he learned another, one of the earlier six vanished. He used the modest comparison of a pint-pot.

<sup>2</sup> George Combe explained his incapacity by pointing to the place on his head where the mathematical bump ought to have been—it showed a chasm. Dean Stanley, as is well known, took five minutes to discover that nine and eight did *not* make twenty-one. What they *did* make, in his opinion, he could not be induced to say.

of his importunity, the examiners finally in sheer mercy let him through, whether he died of hope deferred, or whether his determination ultimately shattered on the rock of repeated failure. At any rate, his story shows the magical force which was believed to reside in a degree.

There was, it is true, another side to the picture. In certain places a prejudice prevailed against degrees—much as it does here and there to-day. People, unable to understand that an examiner cannot guarantee more than that a candidate has shown knowledge and ability of a definite and limited character, were inclined to resentment when they found that a man with a degree or a diploma was without capacity of a totally different kind. For example, when a congregation observed that a minister of high academic distinction was wanting in pulpit eloquence or in social *aplomb*, the tendency was to imagine that the possession of one set of gifts meant the absence of the others. I have known ministers rejected by deacons on the sole ground that they were scholars accredited by Universities, and I have known youths rejected by business firms *because* they had matriculated. "They'll be no use in practice," the heads of the firms used to say. Even in the scholastic world such things were sometimes said. A friend of mine, a B.A., applied for a mastership in a Yorkshire school. "We don't want rubbishy B.A.'s here," said the Head Master. "How do I know a first-class man can teach or keep order?" asked a Head Master in a school of a

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different rank. "Give me a third-class man who is a *schoolmaster* rather than a Senior Wrangler who isn't." But these were exceptions. A B.Sc. was once chosen instead of a B.A. because he had one more letter after his name. The popular feeling was well illustrated by the pride with which the mother of a large family, when her daughter followed her sons to the heights of degreedom, observed, "Well, we're all Bee-hays now." Better educated people agreed with the old lady. Examinations, on the whole, were regarded as tests not merely of that which alone they claimed to test, but of character, energy, and general mental power. And there is something to be said for this view. The new system was certainly better than the old one of favouritism and nepotism which crowded our Circumlocution Offices with Tite Barnacles. Biographies show clearly how many men of real distinction made their first mark in examination lists; and the stimulus of examination-rivalry assuredly made work keener. But it was not fully realised that there were in this system, as in all human schemes, defects and dangers; that examiners were not infallible, and that, even if they had been infallible, examinations, by the nature of the case, can test but a small fraction of human ability. As one who was in youth a tolerably experienced examinee (I passed four public examinations in eighteen months) and who in later years has examined others, I think I can see, with some fairness, both sides of the question. Our Head Master was a devotee of the system, and his boys were



examined like Chinamen who wish to become mandarins. From the beginning of the year their eyes were fixed on the coming test, and as the time drew nearer, they were encouraged to get up early in the morning to cram in more knowledge, and to put in hours of work in the half-holidays, to prevent the knowledge from slipping out. Long practice had made the Head familiar with the tricks of the trade; and by innumerable test-papers, corrected with care and commented on with rigid exactness, he made the boys understand the right devices for pleasing examiners. The pains he took were great; I have known him go through the three-hours paper of a promising boy, noticing the slightest error, and taking a full hour in the process. "This," he would say, "is well enough in itself, but you see it has left you too little time for question 3. That is too much in the style of an essay to suit Professor X (one of the examiners). You had better look up that point again; there is a slight air about your answer as if you were dubious; and it is just the sort of question Mr. Y likes to set." He was careful never to send in two really promising boys together for the same examination; they might get in each other's way; and the relative order of the boys in his "tests" was almost invariably the same as that of the public examination.

His successes, as may be imagined, were proportionate to the trouble he took: they resembled the successes of Fred Archer in the Derby, which took place about the same time. Like Archer, he won

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not only with first-raters, but sometimes with inferior mounts. Quite ordinary lads learned how to use their scanty knowledge, and to show that a little learning might be a paying thing. For three years in succession the school headed the list of the Oxford Junior, and in the fourth year took the second place: and three times in succession had the first boy in the Cambridge Senior. What was more remarkable, for ten years the school never had to mourn a single failure, in the Locals, the "Matric," or any other examination for which he entered his boys. It happened that, when the Matriculation was opened to women, the school had a particularly brilliant boy, and the excitement was, as I said, keen. Would this boy succeed against this unprecedented competition? The publication of the lists was eagerly awaited. It was known that our champion had answered every question—what about his famous rival? Would Britomart's enchanted spear unhorse our Sir Guyon? The answer came: our boy was first, Mrs. Bryant second; and the enthusiasm was unbounded, nor was it diminished when, in the following June, another of our boys took the same place.

All this was achieved without what can fairly be called cramming. The work was so thorough, and the time taken was so ample, that what was learned usually stuck. This was not the case with all candidates; some indeed carried cramming to an extreme. When I was taking the Matriculation, I was standing in the lobby half an hour before the

last paper, that on Chemistry, was to be taken. A young man of about twenty came up. "Can you tell me the questions set in the last two examinations?" said he. I told him, and he noted them down. "Thank you," he said; "then there's no need to know anything about *them*; they won't be set *this* time": and he went off, with Thorpe's manual in his hand, to cram up all the rest of Chemistry in the half hour remaining. Whether he passed or not I cannot say: I have always regretted that I did not ask him his name.

I do not remember hearing any serious doubts expressed as to the value of these tests. The order was distinctly stated to be "an order of merit," and a difference of a single place was held to mark conclusively a difference in general intellectual capacity. The Head Master, who had himself lost several places in his Tripos through an ill-timed attack of neuralgia, might make allowances for illness, but for nothing else. "Are you satisfied with the result?" he asked gloomily of a boy who had failed to realise his expectations; and the boy felt as if he had committed a moral offence, or had missed a catch at cricket.

Such doubts as were actually harboured were largely confined to those who had not succeeded. Somehow, they decided, the examiners had failed to do them justice. But, naturally, they rarely gave these doubts expression: it would have seemed too much like envy of the successful, or inability to take defeat like a man: and the popular sentiment

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remained unaffected. You did well in an examination; you were brilliant. You did poorly; you were an incapable.

At the Universities, where the permanent population consists inevitably of those who have "done well," the feeling is, or was, the same. I knew a Cambridge don who, though a strong Tory, maintained steadily that Arthur Balfour could not really be an able man because he had taken only a second class in his Tripos. He was gravely dubious as to the propriety of Balfour's writing philosophical books: they *must* be second class like their author. I knew also an Oxford tutor who, so long as a pupil of his was expected to get a "first," treated him with great respect, but, when the youth, by some fatality, just missed the honour, never spoke to him again.

But doubts were already beginning timidly to declare themselves, and sometimes in unexpected quarters. The old lists showed the names of famous men, like Clough and Matthew Arnold, in the second class, and Newman's not even there. More recently, according to well-founded report, Jowett himself was uttering contemptuous remarks about at least *some* of the examiners. He heard, it was said, that these pundits were about to stultify themselves by giving a "second" to one of his Balliol protégés. "*You*," he said, "can do what you like, but *I* shall give him the next Balliol Fellowship." They did what they liked, and Jowett did what he had threatened to do.

No account of examinations would be complete

without a reference to the old Oxford "Divinners" or "Ruders"—that is, the examination in the Rudiments of Faith and Religion, which was long kept up to show that Oxford was still the stronghold of orthodoxy. For rigid Dissenters a concession was made; they might take a book of the New Testament instead of the Thirty-nine Articles; but few availed themselves of this permission. A friend of mine, however, certainly did so. He learned the first sixteen Articles, and told me he thought that was enough to satisfy the sternest Anglican examiner. Unluckily, in the Viva Voce, were it, as Chaucer might have said, "by aventur, or sort, or cas," he was put on at the seventeenth Article, on which his ignorance was profound.<sup>1</sup> When, as proved necessary, he took the examination again, he chose the Acts: he had forgotten the sixteen, and was not going to learn the remaining twenty-three.

This Viva Voce, which was open to the public, was the theme of innumerable stories. As its subject, unlike mathematics or science, was familiar to "the general," the sisters and cousins of candidates often appeared in the hall in order to hear the questions and answers; and they sometimes heard remarkable statements. "Who was the first king of Israel?"

<sup>1</sup> Examiners are sometimes acute, and the "Viva" enables them to show their perspicacity. A tutor of mine, who afterwards became a distinguished Member of Parliament, told me that, when reading for "Greats," he had tired of Plato's *Republic* after the seventh Book, and left the remaining three to look after themselves. His "Viva" began ominously. He had forgotten that one of the examiners was a Scotsman, as keen as Robert Bruce to note points left unguarded by a Southron. "Will ye tak your Repooiblic, Mr. Smith," said this gentleman, "and wull ye ohpen it at the eighth Book?"

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"Saul"—and then seeing that the examiner was satisfied, the youth added the fatal words, "who was also called Paul." It was at this Viva Voce that the incident happened which was immortalised by *Punch*. The four examiners, having utterly failed to extract a single accurate answer from their victim, at last asked him to quote any text whatever that he could recall, from Old Testament, New Testament or Apocrypha. His eye brightened, and, looking viciously at his tormentors, he muttered, "And I saw before me four great beasts."

Another youth spared the examiners, but slandered still more blameless people. Requested to mention some trait in the character of the Apostles, he remarked that they were not sportsmen. "The lot fell on Matthias; they ought to have taken him one by one."

There were some curious results in this examination. The greatest oarsman of his time, after a viva in which he caught innumerable "crabs," yet passed, it was supposed because one of the examiners was an enthusiast for rowing. On the other hand, a college friend of my own, who held an exhibition in Hebrew, and had just taken the Pusey and Ellerton Hebrew scholarship, failed in Old Testament History. It was said that he did not recognise the names of Jewish heroes in their English form. He had been asked about Isaac, and the examiner had been irritated when, after a puzzled interval, he muttered, "Oh, you mean Yitzchaq." Or he may have been the very man who carved on the

desk a skull and cross-bones, with the inscription, "Sacred to the Memory—which deserted me at a critical moment."

I have sometimes thought that a volume of considerable interest might be written on the changes in our national character that have been brought about by the rise of an examining class. A very large fraction of our population to-day consists of examiners, assistant-examiners, counters, checkers, and whole armies of apparitors. These are a new phenomenon; they hardly existed at all in 1830. If I am not mistaken, their appearance accounts largely for the intensification of the critical spirit in the public at large. We treat the speeches of statesmen as Matriculation essays, mark them A + to C -, and "place" them accordingly. The style of books and magazines we "correct or justify," usually the former: and if the candidates do not "satisfy" us, we "plough" them. I would go even further. A common practice of examiners some time since was to arrange verse as prose, and request students to restore the scansion. These examiners have now taken, as a change, to poetry; but the force of habit has made them composers of *vers libres*. It is hard, in fact, to find any company of men and women in which there is not at least one examiner, while the rest consist of examinees. Each party looks on the other with suspicious eyes; and the result is that the old simple trust is departing. Be this as it may, the process deserves to be studied by competent sociologists.

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At the time of which I am speaking, examiners had not yet been themselves examined, as they have recently been with disastrous results. But, apart from some very extraordinary decisions which shook the popular faith in their infallibility, a number of significant facts became known. One of my tutors, whose success in his Schools had been more than brilliant, became in his turn an examiner, and, as a matter of curiosity, turned up his own marks in the register. He lighted on some strange things. One of his answers, for example, was marked by one examiner A+ and by another C—; as wide a difference as the system of marking allows. In consequence of this discovery, he became very careful in his own markings; but he found that at times his differences from his colleagues were almost as wide as those which had astonished him in his own case. "I should not like to examine *alone*," said he. "Three or four of us may get *near* the right judgment; one by himself would almost certainly be wrong." In this confession we can see the growth of the feeling which, much later, Sir Walter Raleigh expressed openly in an epigram: The Oxford Final Schools and the Day of Judgment are *two* examinations, not one.

I can tell other significant stories. A friend of mine went in for Mathematical Moderations, as was then possible, in his fourth term, intending, if not satisfied with his work, to "scratch" and go in again in his sixth. Having finished the papers, he went through them with his tutor, who said



that he appeared to be a "borderline" case, and advised him to withdraw. He "scratched" accordingly, only to hear that he had just reached the first-class standard. He went in again in June, much better equipped, but by a series of accidents got only a second. Which was his real class?

I have had the good fortune to catch some examiners in their "softer hours," and have heard some extraordinary things. One may be worth recording. In the final classical school, there were three examiners, all men of the highest distinction. One of them—I will call him A—was reading a certain answer. "First-rate," he said to himself. He read it again, and had his doubts. He read it a third time, and saw that the man literally knew nothing about the subject, but had, with great cleverness, contrived to camouflage his ignorance under a disguise of sounding language. A took the paper round to B. "Read that," he said. B did so, and said, "What's the matter? First-rate, I call it." "Read it again," said A. B did so, and began to doubt. He read it a third time, and then said, "The man nearly took me in; he knows nothing whatever." The two then went to C, who passed through exactly the same phases. But how to mark the question? A thought they ought to mark by knowledge, but thought ten would do for "style." B, whose *amour propre* had been a little piqued by the man's audacity, would, had the rules allowed, have given a minus mark. But C was obdurate. "We mark not knowledge," he said,

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“ but capacity. If a man can so nearly take in three people like us, he is an able man; he is, in fact, first class. I shall give him the maximum.” In the final result, they compromised, and took an average; but the story shows on what chances great things hinge. Had all three examiners been like C, the man’s place would have been even higher than it was; had all been like B, he would have descended several places.

In at least one respect the later Victorians, with all their trust in examinations, made a great advance on their predecessors. They refused to make the minute distinctions on which so much stress had been previously laid. There is a well-known story of the keen contest between two first-rate scholars in the Classical Tripos of 1844—Henry Maine, afterwards the famous author of *Ancient Law*, and W. G. Clark, afterwards joint-editor of the Cambridge Shakespeare. The struggle was watched as if it had been a boat-race,<sup>1</sup> and bets were laid on the result. For days the two heroes ran neck and neck, until at last the examiners were able to detect a minute difference in a Latin verse paper. This was enough to give Maine the glory of a “Senior Classic,” and to reduce Clark to the second place. To-day, beyond a doubt, two such scholars would be bracketed together, and the examiners would be spared the necessity of making so invidious a choice.

<sup>1</sup> As far as I can guess, the examiners gave hints, from day to day, as to the “state of the poll.”

A story, illustrating the exaggerated importance attached to a single place, was told me long ago by a Cambridge Fellow of eighty years—he positively asserted its literal truth. In a Classical Tripos, a man, S, had been proclaimed Senior, and another, T, second, by a margin of a dozen marks out of perhaps three thousand. The two men had actually taken their degrees in this order. In the succeeding Long Vacation, by some unaccountable impulse, one of the examiners was led to look at the papers again, and even to add up the marks. To his horror, he found that the Senior had been given twenty too many.<sup>1</sup> He added them up again and again, always with the same result; and the dreadful fact stared him in the face, that the second man was really first. He took the papers round to the other examiners, who, after the most careful investigation, agreed that the inexplicable and horrible blunder had indeed been made. What was to be done? They consulted the Proctors, who refused to advise them. The Vice-Chancellor was then called in, and, after much thought, ruled that the official order must stand. He had ascertained that the “defeated” candidate was in any case certain of a Fellowship; and he said that a private intimation of his real rank should be sent to him. It is satisfactory that, according to my aged informant, the two students remained perfectly friendly, and were indeed rather amused than fretted by the *contretemps*.

<sup>1</sup> Such things do happen. I have heard that on one occasion *six* calculators working out logarithms, to four places of decimals, reached the same result. A seventh differed, and proved to be right.

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To-day, like Maine and Clark, they would be bracketed together, and the trouble would hardly arise.

The intense competition to gain perhaps one rung in the examination ladder—for a single place might mean the gain or loss of a Fellowship—had sometimes what the journalese of to-day calls “repercussions.” In 1845, to the amazement of the whole academic world, Thomson of Peterhouse, afterwards the great Lord Kelvin, was beaten in the Mathematical Tripos by Parkinson of John’s. The reason was soon revealed. Parkinson had practised fast writing till he rivalled a stenographer. But he, and others, paid for it. His script became absolutely undecipherable—Dean Stanley’s was copper-plate in comparison. Forty years later, when he was Senior Tutor of John’s, it fell to him to write to a schoolfellow of mine who had just obtained a scholarship at the college. Doubtless the matter was important; it was at any rate concealed as carefully as an Admiralty code. The letter was passed round the upper forms of the school, and, apart from the printed address at the top of the page, not a single jot or tittle could be interpreted by the keenest eyes. Magnifying glasses were pressed into the service—in vain. It was taken to the Head Master, who smiled grimly—he had known Dr. Parkinson of old. He declined to risk his eyesight. “There is nothing for it,” he said, “but to write to Dr. Parkinson, and ask him to send you his information in carefully printed

capitals." This was done, and something fairly legible was the result. But the rumour spread that Parkinson's place in the Tripos was due to the fact that the examiners, unable to read his answers, had charitably *assumed* that they were right.

None the less, despite all that can be said against examinations, it is extraordinary how accurate the results are upon the whole, and how, with all the narrowness of their range, they contrive to pick out the right men. Macaulay was not so far out when he said that if men were examined in Cherokee, the man who wrote the best Cherokee verses, and showed the most delicate appreciation of Cherokee particles, would on the whole be superior to the man who could perform neither of these feats. I can illustrate this truth from the records of London University. In early times the Matriculation examination allowed but one choice—German instead of Greek; everything else was compulsory. Yet, among the boys who took first place in this examination, scarcely one failed to gain distinction in later years. Many were Senior Wranglers (among these were Lord Moulton and Sir Donald MacAlister), several became well-known head masters, eminent professors, doctors, judges, or ministers of religion. I recall, among the names of those who gained the M.A. Gold Medal, not a single one that was not subsequently justified—I need only mention R. W. Dale, of whom I have spoken already, and Walter Bagehot, of whom the world will long continue to speak. Making every allowance for the

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fact that an early success of this kind is not only a stimulus but a great aid towards later successes, one cannot but admire the precision with which the examiners contrived, with the scanty means at their disposal, to detect real capacity.

The examination system may need reform; but those who would abolish it will find it hard to provide a substitute. Certainly no proposal yet made shows the slightest likelihood of giving us an improvement. The system, I think, will survive, though it may suffer sea-changes into something rich and strange. It is like Dryden's Hind, which

*Often had been chased with horns and hounds  
And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds  
Aimed at her heart, was often forced to fly,  
And doomed to death, though fated not to die.*

## CHAPTER XI

### GAMES

FROM SCHOOLS to examinations, and thence to games. In my time I have seen the gradual but rapid ascent of these from a subordinate rank to a position of almost Hitlerian predominance. I recall the fears of certain scholars as they noted the encroachments of sport, and the vain efforts of Mrs. Partington dons to stem the tide. I remember Mark Pattison's proposal so to alter the dates of Oxford terms as to "deal a deadly blow at athletics in the University"; and I have seen the utter defeat of all such plans, until now the dons are, or pretend to be, as enthusiastic as the "Blues" themselves. They have at any rate found in games a useful substitute for the weather as a neutral subject for conversation; by confining their remarks to them they may avoid the fatal charge that they talk "shop"—that is, that they talk of what they know something about. This is, I think, an almost exclusively British characteristic. In the Darwin celebrations of 1909, a foreign professor of science was invited to dine with the Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge. He knew that this society included some of the most learned men of the age; and he expected, as he said

afterwards, a *noctem cenamque deum*. He heard not a syllable of scientific talk: the conversation was exclusively about cricket. This would have annoyed a tutor of my own, twenty or thirty years before. In the year 1884, the Oxford cricket team was playing the Australians, and for a wonder was likely to defeat its renowned antagonists. On the last day it was left with but a hundred or so to win. I happened to be walking with my tutor, and, in desperation for something to say, remarked, "By now, I suppose, our men will have won the match." "And what will they do then?" he asked sarcastically. What had they been playing *for*?

If one defines a game as an amusement, the result of which does not matter, recent years have shown a sad decline in the number of real games played. So far as I can see, these amusements give rise to at least as much misery as pleasure. To listen to the talk of golfers after a match, one would think that to have failed over a certain hole was a crime to be repented in dust and ashes: and the language one hears when a stroke is "foozled" is of the kind one would expect if bankruptcy had suddenly descended out of a clear sky. An indigent friend of mine, of a religious turn, made his son a caddie in order that he might associate with gentlemen. The boy's vocabulary, however, degenerated so rapidly that the father, utterly horrified, sacrificed the money and removed the lad from the area of infection.

Why people should pay large sums, and travel



long distances, in order to expose themselves to easily avoidable mental anguish, is hard to understand: and these tours in search of vexation have multiplied to a vast extent during my lifetime. If I recall the past with any exactness, games, with the notable exception of croquet—that invention of Satan for the exasperation of the soul—were usually played for pleasure, and gave it. Nor did people worry much, as they do now, about games in which they were not personally engaged. They watched a match between England and Australia with interest, but without fancying that the fate of empires hung on the result. In 1882 we were living within a mile of the Oval, where the famous match in which, for the first time in England, the Australians were victorious, was played. As boys, we were naturally somewhat excited, and my elder brother went with a friend to see what would happen—whether his hero Spofforth would bowl out the Englishmen, or whether the few runs required would be made. The two came back to tell the story. With five wickets to fall, England had needed only eighteen runs; and she obtained but ten of them. It was a thrilling tale; but neither they, nor anyone else I heard speaking about it, thought of it as anything more than a fine exhibition of courage, skill, and determination. No “patriotic” feeling entered into the matter: and the defeat was no more disastrous than a defeat of one school team by another. Had the modern frenzy been conceived of as possible, it would have been laughed

at. There were no long and wearisome discussions, before the match, as to whether the right men had been chosen, and no bitter quarrels after it. A missed catch was not a moral offence, setting a mark on a man as if he were a reincarnation of Abel's murderer. It was not till late in the century that a first-rate cricketer gave up playing for his county, and attached himself to a less responsible club, on the ground that he did not like every slip of his to be set in a note-book, conned and learnt by heart, to be cast into his teeth by a journalist. He preferred a field on which he could make none or a hundred without notice and with almost equal enjoyment.

So keen, apparently, is the agony suffered by people to-day when the luck of the game goes against them, that I suppose they pursue it in something like the spirit of the Flagellants of old, to snatch a perverted joy out of the pain. It must be a form of masochism. At any rate one sees thousands going forth on a cold and rainy day to watch a match which, from all one can learn, gives them little but spasms of alternating anxiety and relief: something as far removed from either Stoical ataraxia or Christian resignation as can well be imagined. This sort of thing was seen among the crowds who watched Sayers and Heenan in 1860, but the mania had, I think, largely calmed down in the seventies and eighties. It has, I should fancy, been greatly stimulated by the institution of leagues, championships, and prizes; and the Press, giving

the public what it wants, has made the public want it more. It has induced the feeling that national prestige is bound up with success in athletic contests; and, as prestige is an affair of feeling, it is to be feared that the nation does actually suffer in repute if one of its forty million citizens loses a race or a game of golf to a similar fraction of another nation. Whether the harm done by such a sentiment may not outweigh the good is another matter. But for some very obvious political and geographical considerations, Australia might have left the Empire because of a dispute about "body-line" bowling, and Sweden has had to give up matches with Finland because of the intense national antagonism these contests have fostered. Sometimes this sentiment is entirely artificial. The armies are often as purely mercenary as those of Carthage in ancient times or those of Italian princelings during the Renaissance: yet thousands of people will cheer themselves hoarse or weep themselves blind over the successes or failures of a team in which there is perhaps not a single man but has been imported from a distance. One hears people groaning over an American victory at golf. Not infrequently the American invading force contains two or three champions who, a year or so ago, were Englishmen.

The feeling is shown in smaller spheres. A school gains a reputation by its success in games, or even by the success of its old boys in games. I myself heard a public speech in which the speaker ascribed

the progress of Clifton, not to the ability of its two great Head Masters, Dr. Percival and Mr. Wilson, or to the eccentric genius of T. E. Brown, but to the fact that two or three of its old boys had attained great fame as members of a victorious Oxford eleven. On the other hand, if the Old Boys fail, the school suffers. As a schoolmaster once gloomily put it, "If our Old Boys are beaten at football, people seem to think that the present masters can't teach Latin."

Not unnaturally, therefore, a personage has gained in importance who, though not quite unknown fifty years ago, is now to be found everywhere—the sports-master, whose business is to magnify his office, and to insist on the pre-eminent necessity of a good stance at cricket or of an eye for an opportunity at football. Unlike the other masters, he has the great advantage of working along the lines of public opinion. Those boys who are distinguished in games assist him both with word and deed. I once overheard a small boy defending himself against the charge of "swotting," which was based on the fact that he was much higher in his form than one of his age and size had any right to be. He indignantly denied that he swotted harder than anyone else. "It's the pater's fault," he said; "he sent me to school at six, and I can't help knowing a decent amount." But I never heard of any boy who had to defend himself against the charge of swotting at cricket or football; and the games-master may use methods of

persuasion or compulsion, without as a rule arousing resentment, which, if adopted by the Latin master, might provoke a rebellion: methods which may be best characterised by saying that they are closely modelled on those employed by University rowing coaches. Listening to them, I have been reminded of Dante's words about the lost:

*Bestemmiavano Iddio e lor parenti,  
L'umana specie, il luogo, il tempo, e il seme  
Di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.*

There are, however, worms that turn. A pious youth, insulted beyond bearing, was heard to say, "Sir, I have no desire to be damned"; and a small boy in another school, playing at half-back, once boldly objected to the violent language in which the master criticised his tactics. He even went so far as to doubt the master's capacity and knowledge of the game. "I was an International before you were born," retorted the irritated expert. "Easy enough to be an International in those days," replied the boy. What happened to him must be left to the imagination.

In my youth a game was encouraged for the sake of exercise; it was played for health and enjoyment, and to make you more fit to work in school. The idea that it has a moral or religious value is comparatively new. It was not till late in the century that one heard chaplains talking of football and cricket as if they were at least as efficacious as Christianity itself in the promotion of virtue and

honour. By the nineties, perhaps, this dogma had become firmly established. Preachers and prize-givers had then begun to dilate on the ethical worth of scrummaging and wicket-keeping; and Christianity was recommended as a species of "playing the game." A school chaplain, in the Masters' Common Room, once dilated on these aspects of games with such energy and freedom that a cynical colleague, of an elder generation, congratulated him on having found an effective substitute for the old-fashioned grace of God. "No need now to convert a boy," said he; "shove him into the scrum and he becomes a saint."

To one who has looked on, from a detached standpoint, at the vicissitudes of games, the theme has both a pleasing and a melancholy interest. My heart can still leap up when—which is now rarely—I behold a cricket-ball in the sky: but I certainly regret some of the changes. The enormous scores, due to the artificially prepared pitches, make one look back with longing to the days when, in a match between Oxford and Cambridge, G. B. Studd was caught at long-stop. The ball rose unexpectedly on a rough patch; the batsman tipped it, and was caught forty yards in the rear. In every over, there was at least one ball that either shot along the ground or rose up in this disconcerting fashion. Hence the comparative fewness of big scores. Not till 1870 was a "century" made in the University match: nowadays centuries are, as I heard a man express it, "as thick as thieves in Vallombrosa."

W. G. Grace, of course, minded neither bruises nor bowlers, and made enormous scores almost like Bradman to-day: I well remember seeing him make a hundred and get all ten opposing wickets, on the same afternoon. But the others, though fully as good as any now playing, were content with an average of twenty or thirty—greatly to the pleasure of the spectators, who like to see a wicket fall quite as much as to see a vast number of runs.

Another innovation, which would have disgusted Daft or Alfred Mynn, is the tea interval, which has but one advantage; it often puts the "set" batsman's eye temporarily out, and leads to the fall of his wicket, a consummation devoutly, as a rule, to be wished. The old times, when two days were often ample for the completion of a match, and when a score of three hundred was sufficient for a victory in a single innings, were in this respect better than the present.<sup>1</sup> Many Englishmen, if they told the truth, would agree with the American baseball enthusiast, who, having been persuaded to watch a cricket match, remarked that as long as there were funerals in his own country he saw no reason why cricket should become a popular entertainment there.

There are still, however, lively forms of the game. The village green provides plenty of matches which are in themselves, and apart from factitious pomp

<sup>1</sup> The best bowlers of the seventies, like Alfred Shaw, got their wickets at an average price of eight or nine runs. To the Alfred Shaws of to-day the price is about sixteen. To compare the batsmen of to-day with those of old, therefore, we must roughly halve their averages.

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and circumstance, far more interesting than the first-class entertainments: and, in my own time, at school, there were certain varieties of the game which one could wish were more common to-day. The rarity of set matches was compensated by short "scratch" games which were greatly enjoyed, such, for instance, as "tip and run," which ensured a rapid interchange of ins and outs. Another very popular variety was one in which, so soon as school was over, there was a rush to the pitch. The two fastest runners secured the bats; the next two bowled from each end, keeping wicket as was required. Should a man be caught, the fieldsman took the bat, and the batsman became the bowler. Were a man bowled, the man who bowled him took his place. In this way—as strictly defensive batting was not approved—I have known as many as twenty boys have an innings within an hour. The democratic principle was satisfied; and I am sure that the players appreciated this game much more keenly than their successors enjoy waiting wearily in the pavilion for the great men to get out—or, what is almost as common, for the innings to be declared, so that they have lingered in padded and gloved unease, for nothing at all. As now played, cricket is a game for the skilled performer only; and this is the reason why—to whisper a secret as perilous as that of Midas—it is not really popular at schools. This assertion may well appear a blasphemy; but its truth may be easily tested provided the vote be taken in secret, and the inviolability of the ballot



be assured. If this is done, the investigator will probably be astonished at the severity of the judgments passed by British boys on the "birthright of British boyhood." The laudations openly bestowed on it are, to a surprising extent, mouth-honour like that paid to Macbeth, "which the fond heart would fain deny but dare not." A return to simplicity, speed, and variety, such as was known of old, would soon bring back the ancient popularity. Let more boys share in it, and more will love it.

In football, as in all games, I suppose I have the distinction of being probably the worst player on record; and to the fact that my feebleness, like a city set on a hill, could not be hid, I am inclined to think that I owe my life. It was my fate once to have to play against a team of Welsh colliers, whose idea of the game was apparently that entertained by the youths of Edward I's time, when the King, finding that the slaughter involved in football matches seriously diminished the numbers available for his Scottish wars, suppressed the game by Act of Parliament. This particular match early degenerated into an endeavour to "knock out" all the good players. As, in our team, there was one member of the Cardiff fifteen, and two boys who were within a few seasons to play for Wales, these three were picked out for the most ferocious attacks, against which they defended themselves with corresponding ferocity. Seeing this, I regretted that I had not made my will. But it was soon obvious that our opponents, who, with all their savagery,

were good judges of the finer points of the game, perceived clearly that, were I put out of action, a hindrance to my own side, and an advantage to theirs, would be removed: they therefore treated me with the utmost consideration, and I escaped unharmed, like Lot, out of the midst of the overthrow.

Poor performer as I was, however, I think I may say that I have played in more varieties of the great game than many first-rate players. My memories go back to times before there were any "international" matches,<sup>1</sup> and before the many species of the game had been reduced to three or four codes. Before the start, you had to arrange under which king the two Bezonian armies should conduct their warfare. It might be a game in which you were forbidden to carry the ball, but must bounce it as you ran: this I think is still the rule in Australia. In another form of the game, called I believe by the name of the Sheffield Union, if you caught the ball you had a free kick; if you touched it but failed to hold it, the free kick went to the other side. In both these games, if I remember aright, the ball was what a gentleman given to big words defined as "oblate": in a peculiar kind of Rugby, in which also I played, the *corpus vile* was "prolate." Here you were allowed to tackle your enemy, but to do so legally you must be facing him at the moment of collision; a tackle from the rear was illegal. The sight of men running in spirals,

<sup>1</sup> What Bentham, who invented this word, would have thought of its most common present-day application, is a matter of pleasing conjecture.

in order to get round to the front, was often interesting. When a try was got, the method was still that described in *Tom Brown*: the try-getter had to drop the ball out from the place where he had touched it down. If one of his own side caught it, he took a place-kick from his own position, which of course, was usually in front of the goal. There had been, in fact, little change from Tom Brown's time, except that the savage "hacking" had been abolished.

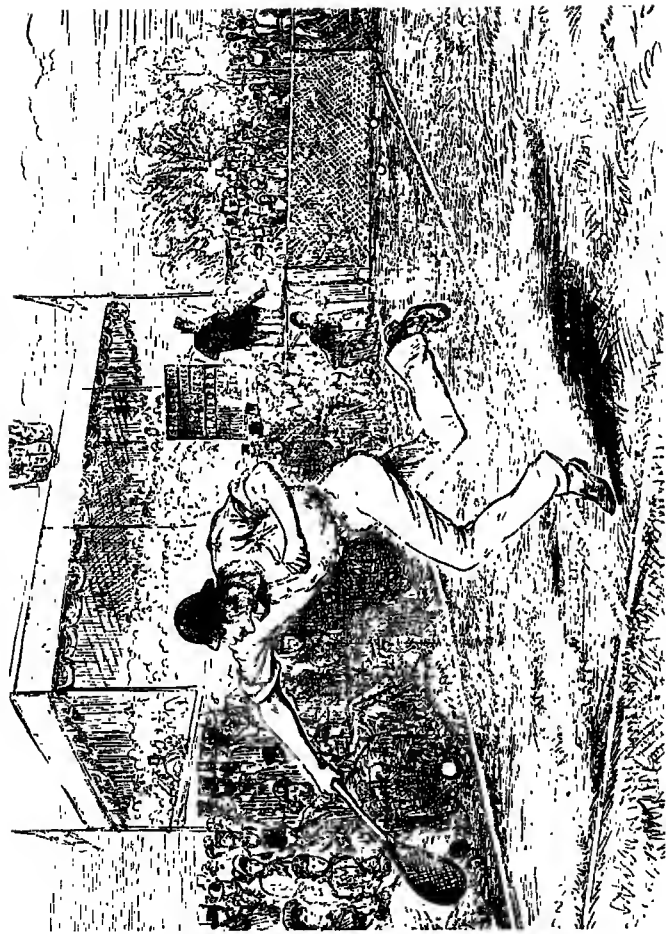
Later, when Rugby was more clearly marked off from Association, it still retained features which would surprise spectators at Twickenham to-day. There were twenty players on each side. Fifteen of these formed the scrummage (then called *scrimmage*); behind them were two "halves," or, as they were then called, "quarter-backs" (they are still so called in America); behind them a single "half" or three-quarter, and behind him two full-backs for final defence. The scrummages often lasted twenty minutes, for heeling, which involved using force in front of the ball, was illegal: and I have often seen these thirty heroes struggling on until, as at the battle of Bouvines, the utter exhaustion of one pack meant almost certain victory for the other; for there was now the chance of dribbling the ball in something like an unencumbered field. If an opponent stopped the ball, he had to do so *moving*: even a momentary touch on the ground meant that the ball was dead in that place, and the scrummage had to be formed again. What added to the

confusion was the presence of two "umpires," unabashed partisans, armed with flags, on the actual arena of play, impeding both players and referee. An umpire who saw an infringement on his enemy's side would wave his flag: but the referee need pay no attention. If, however, both umpires raised their flags, the referee was bound to give some decision. It will thus be seen that there were on the field at once forty-three men like Ouida's hero, "under two flags." Direction was given by a more or less effective instrument, the *vox humana*, which often failed to be heard. I cannot but admit that the present age has made, in football at least, a distinct advance on its predecessor. Ten players have been entirely suppressed; the umpires have been relegated to the touch-line, and the penetrating whistle has taken the place of the inaudible voice. The arrangement of the armies, also, has been altered. One full-back, when that superlative player H. B. Tristram appeared, was found sufficient; three three-quarters, increased to four by the insight of a Cardiff captain, took the place formerly occupied by one; and the two halves have been assigned precise and independent duties. Even the forwards have now each his special post. What is equally an improvement, a single goal no longer outweighs any number of tries: we no longer hear of matches in which A, with one goal, is victorious over B with eight or nine tries. Still more, the savagery is, if not abolished at any rate regulated. I have seen matches in which seven disabled warriors have been carried off the

field. Such a casualty list is, I should think, rarely seen to-day.

As I look back, I can see in football, as in other things, a growth in specialisation, and a decided attempt to organise on more and more rigid lines. In older times there was more confusion but also more individual liberty: and I often think that this might be paralleled by the constant increase in the power of our bureaucrats, who are making ever deeper inroads into our daily lives. The resulting order may be greater, but the freedom is daily narrowing down as precedent is made the excuse for other precedents.

I am old enough to have seen the rise of other games which may, not improbably, eclipse even cricket and football. Tennis, one of the "sports of kings," was far too expensive and difficult for people of average incomes and moderate leisure. The happy thought of an inventor, so to modify it as to make it an outdoor sport and comparatively cheap, marks this man as a public benefactor. As I first played this game, it was a "pat-ball" performance; the net was so high as to present an insuperable obstacle to the hard hitter; but ere long it was lowered, and made the "Renshaw smash," which revolutionised the game, possible. The Renshaw twins, indeed, were almost as renowned in England as Castor and Pollux in Sparta: they burst upon the firmament like meteors, popularised the game, and dominated it for ten years. There was, I think, a decline in the vogue when they retired; but the



MR. HARTLEY, THE CHAMPION AT LAWN TENNIS, 1881



game soon revived, to advance without a break to its present immense and world-wide repute. Perhaps its best feature is that, within limits, it is as suitable for women as for men; and nothing has done more to rationalise women's costume than the requirements of lawn-tennis. As played by women in the eighties it was an affair of moving in fetters: a high collar, a dress that trailed on the ground, and an appalling weight of clothing,<sup>1</sup> made it impossible for any but the most stalwart of Amazons to hit the ball. Progress in ridding oneself of these impedimenta was slow, but it was sure, and gave no small help in the general cause of female emancipation. If any woman played the chief part in this great process I should think it was Miss Lottie Dod, who at sixteen carried all before her, and a year or two later, seeking for other worlds to conquer, turned to golf, and became champion in that game also.

One of my pleasantest memories is that of a match at Cardiff between Willie Renshaw and Lottie Dod. After winning the men's Welsh championship, Renshaw suggested to her, as she had won the women's, that they should play an exhibition match. He gave her the tremendous start of half-forty, that is of two points in the even games and three in the

<sup>1</sup> The long trailing dress of the eighties illustrates the immense force of fashion. On a rainy day a lady was watched for two hours playing golf on a course which was little better than a quagmire. She had a train about an foot long, which at every movement accumulated more mud. She made no attempt to pin it up; convention forbade, and after a time it was likely that no pin would have sustained the weight. She must have been athletic to endure the toil of eighteen holes with this Sisyphean burden. My informant, a woman, reflected solemnly on the labour the maid would have to undergo in cleaning the dress at the end of the day.



odd ones: and he won by two sets to one. Not without difficulty, however, for this astonishing girl—she was then only seventeen—made him exert himself to the utmost. Though, as I have heard, Tilden has often played Helen Wills, and has never lost a single game, still less a set, yet I think the improvement of women's play is shown by the change since Renshaw's time. I am sure that no man champion could give to the woman champion of to-day the odds that Renshaw gave to the heroine of the eighties.

Even in lawn-tennis, however, a game which has perhaps done as much for the general health of the people as anything, there has, I think, been too great a tendency to exalt it into a profession. A young girl of my acquaintance, who was training for a musical career, showed an extraordinary talent for the game. She happened to come across the reigning champion, who was struck with her ability. "Put yourself in my hands," said he, after a match in which she had partnered him with great success, "and you shall be lady champion in two years." She answered that tennis was but an amusement, and that she must put her musical career before it. The great man was so utterly astonished at her ignorance of the relative importance of things, that he turned away without another word. It was as if she had made "*il gran rifiuto*"; and there are many who have, I fear, yielded to the temptation of gaining a short-lived glory and lived to repent at leisure. In most cases an athletic career

is a *cul de sac*. It would be instructive to learn what proportion of those on the dole consists of men who have been golf caddies, tennis-ball retrievers, or momentarily famous footballers. But perhaps the champion's opinion is only another example of the tendency of men to fancy their own chosen career the solitary one in the world worth pursuing: a tendency which certainly helps to success in it. One meets naval officers, soldiers, clergymen, painters, musicians, who seem to think that no one in any other calling has any right to exist. I have had experiences which I suppose most people could parallel. Happening to be in a town dominated by retired army men, I was asked what regiment I belonged to, and when I replied "To none," I was looked at as though I had strayed into a *levée* without a court-dress. Such men should have a card over their beds reminding them that, if people of other professions ceased to exist, their own existence would be a short one.

The advance and retrocession of games in public favour, would form a pleasant subject for a digressive essay by Montaigne, or for some "antitheta" by Bacon on the "Vicissitude of Things." In an unlucky year for Oxford sport a man once remarked, "We have lost everything, down to golf." No one would use that expression to-day: it is doubtful whether any game has now a higher reputation than this one, and yet it is but a comparatively few years since Mr. Balfour, a Scotsman, made it fashionable in England—a feat at one time almost

as unlikely as if Mr. Ramsay MacDonald should make cricket popular across the Border. Much more recent is the vogue of squash-rackets, a game—in an elementary form—played at hundreds of schools in the seventies and eighties, but never thought worthy of championships or reports in *The Times*. Lacrosse, introduced from Canada, about 1877, at one time bade fair to rival football and altogether to drive out hockey; and unquestionably it has, especially in its freedom from vexatious rules, great advantages over either. It is still played, and has proved an excellent game for girls as well as for boys; but for some reason it has hardly maintained its old position. One reason I believe I can assign. Every movement of the player is perfectly visible to the spectators; and, however athletic he may be, the mistakes he is sure to make as a beginner are ridiculous and, to a vain man, humiliating. I have repeatedly seen a man, in the endeavour to shoot the ball towards the enemy's goal, send it behind his back through his own. Men with a sporting reputation do not like to expose themselves to *contretemps* like this, and hence fight shy of the game. As played by the Toronto team in England many years ago, it revealed itself as a game of unsurpassed beauty, grace, and skill; but even that team could not make it really popular in this country.

And now what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to speak of rounders, tip-cat, knurr and spell (in which there is I believe still a

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championship), Highland or Grasmere sports, wrestling, ski-ing, tobogganing, rackets, not to mention diabolo, table-tennis, hop-sotch, and a once very popular sport known by the strange title of "hot mutton pies." I might trace the history of ball-catching from the "sphaerinda" of Nausicaa to the "broken bottles" of the London parks. I might discourse of the tug-of-war, the swing, or the Giant's stride, from their primitive origin as powerful magical spells to their present condition in "Lansburys." I know a little of all these. There is only one so-called sport which does not concern me, for the late Victorian age in its sentimentality refused to countenance it. I refer to the prize fight, which, after a period of splendour in the days of Tom Cribb and Bendigo, sank into disgrace, from which, for some unknown reason, it has been recently rescued. In my youth few men who valued their reputation would have shown open interest in it.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME OXFORD MEMORIES

A SHORT TIME AGO I revisited Oxford, and hardly recognised it. Was this the city of the dreaming spires I had known of old? In my time, everybody went to lectures on foot, except one Professor, who made himself conspicuous by riding a tricycle. The city was, except on the Fifth of November, quiet: and you could still think of it as mediæval. To-day High Street is like Cheapside, and the Cornmarket like the Strand; a perpetual stream of motor-cars enables the cycling undergraduate to follow Nietzsche's recommendation and live dangerously; as he guides his machine among those scores of lethal engines he must be constantly dodging death by inches. I paused near the entrance to the Union to gaze on the seething mass of mechanised motion. An old don came out and stood beside me. "This is different from what it used to be," I said. "Yes, sir," he answered; "I have watched its gradual growth during half a century, and with ever increasing distaste."

I walked down High Street, making my way against a stream of people, crossed the Bridge, and arrived at the place where, in old days, I had watched cricket matches. I looked in vain for a

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blade of grass. Here was a factory devoted to the production of means of rapid locomotion. This is where Morris Oxfords and Morris Cowleys are produced in their thousands. Can it be that Lord Nuffield will be remembered when Wykeham and Waynflete are forgotten? I began to imitate the spires, and dream. "How changed is here each spot man makes or fills. Are ye too changed, ye hills?" I suppose they are still there; but they are hidden from view by hundreds of houses which did not exist forty years since. Such is the march of progress.

These physical changes are but an external parable of an inward metamorphosis. Neither dons nor undergraduates are as they were. I see tutors on cycles, and their pupils, though with the same tattered gowns as of old, wearing a look unmistakably modern. But I see also in fact what Tennyson saw only from the Mount of Vision—girls in cap and gown, and women dons walking the streets in total unconsciousness of the strangeness of their position. In my time Somerville College was in existence, but one rarely saw a woman student. It was said, indeed, that to prevent contamination, Somervillians went about in bath-chairs with glass covers. They might see the place, but must not mingle with its inhabitants. Lady Margaret was there, and Miss Wordsworth was known by sight; but she had a family of perhaps half a dozen, who were so unimportant that they could take Greats as a privilege without having passed either Smalls or "Mods." It was thus that Gertrude Bell took her

History Finals, without knowing a word of Latin or Greek: and it was thus that Grace Chisholm took Mathematics from Cambridge without residing in Oxford at all. You could afford to allow women a chance—they were so few that it did not matter. You might permit Mrs. Humphry Ward to examine in Spanish for the Taylorian Scholarship; but the very idea of giving women degrees occurred I think to nobody. To-day, if their numbers were not limited by law they might swamp the University.

As a matter of fact, it then seemed as if there were men in Oxford quite great enough to dispense with feminine help. There was Liddell, Dean of Christchurch, whose "carriage" and appearance were such that one might think him fit to rule empires. He was not yet merely the father of "Alice"; was he not the part-author of the great Greek Dictionary? True, he suffered the ordinary fate of partnership. An American was said to have heard him preach, and to have asked whether he was the Liddell of Liddell and Scott. When told it was so, the man said, "What a wonderful man Scott must have been!" Or was it vice versa? The friends of Liddell always maintained that *he* was the wonderful half of the pair. Scott, it was rumoured, was the contributor to the Dictionary of its solitary joke. "Sycophant," a false accuser, said the great work, had been derived from *sycon*, a fig, and *phaino*, to reveal; but this was a figment. By my time, however, the joke had vanished from the Lexicon, and Scott had disappeared from Balliol:



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**DU MAURIER'S DRAWING OF THE RESULTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN**





he was now Dean of Rochester, and Balliol was ruled by Jowett, a man never to be forgotten by those who have seen either him or the caricature of him by Max Beerbohm. With his chubby cheeks and innocent look, he might have been an albino baby; but that fancy soon faded when you saw the compelling force of his eyes, and noticed that the infant features could play like those of Henry Irving or Charles Peace.

He was Vice-Chancellor when I was a freshman, and it was his business to preside at a kind of swearing-in. He presented us with a copy of *Statuta Universitatis Oxoniensis*, and gave us some paternal advice. I never saw on human countenance such contemptuous cynicism as his showed as he went through this formality. It said clearly, "You'll obey these rules or you won't, and as far as I'm concerned I do not care." I was reminded of this long afterwards when I heard of the dream of the examiner who was chalking the Ten Commandments on a blackboard, and then—the habit of years asserting itself—he added, "Only five of these need be attempted." I still keep the *Statuta* on my shelves.

Jowett was unquestionably the first figure in the University. He had his enemies. There were those who called his bi-terminal sermons in Balliol Chapel "Glimpses into the Obvious": and other colleges, which swarmed with Fellows from Balliol, disliked hearing so often the phrase "The Master says"—as if there were only one Master in Oxford.

Some survivors of the old Tractarian days—when his election to the Professorship of Greek had been opposed on the ground of his Latitudinarian opinions—still grumbled at his Liberal views. “Stick to the religion of your fathers,” he used to say; “what was good enough for them is good enough for you”: and, as Balliol had a number of Hindu undergraduates, this was held to show that Jowett had no sympathy with Christian Missions. A Balliol Thug, it was whispered, was converted to Anglicanism. The Master sent for him. “What do you mean,” he said, “by deserting a religion which deals so admirably with the problem of the superfluous population?” “Look at John Wesley Jones,” he said of a Methodist scholar. “He keeps his name, and isn’t ashamed of his Church.” Alas, when John Wesley became a Fellow of another college, and wrote a book, the title-page bore the name Wellesley.

Jowett was accused also of cultivating too exclusively those of his pupils who were likely to be great. Asquith, Curzon, Edward Grey, he favoured, but the humble and meek he never exalted. There was some truth in the charge; but the answer was generally that, as nearly everybody in Balliol was bound to be distinguished, he omitted very few. He did, it was said, once try to associate with a man of ordinary intellect. He sent his compliments, and would Mr. Smith favour him by going a walk with him? Mr. Smith went—the regulation three miles to a certain bridge and three miles back. Not a

word was spoken on the outward journey. At the bridge there was a halt. The youth then ventured timidly to open his mouth. "That's a fine view," said he. They turned; silence was resumed. At the gate of the college the Master added his share to the conversation. "That was a very foolish remark you made an hour ago," he uttered, in the high-pitched voice which could, unluckily, be heard for a considerable distance, and *was* heard.

Once, indeed, but not in Oxford, he met his match. In Switzerland he happened upon an undergraduate whose acquaintance with Greek literature was wide. The talk turned on Greek novelists, whom the eccentric youth knew better than he knew Thucydides or Plato. "I have never read Achilles Tatius," said Jowett. "What! A Professor of Greek, and you haven't read *him*!" observed the young man.

It is hard, in recalling the stories of Jowett, to distinguish the apocryphal from the true; for a personality like his lent itself easily to Plutarchian anecdote. But I believe the following to be canonical. One vacation, Jowett desired the college to be empty in order to have full opportunity for certain repairs. Six men, however, wanted to stay up in order to work; for even in Balliol there are obstacles to continuous study in term-time—lectures, it is said, being not the least obstructive. "If you stay," said the Master, "you can't have dinner in College." Two men went down. Next day he announced that lunch would be cut off. One more disappeared.

"Morning chapel compulsory." Another left. "No breakfast, and compulsory evensong." This was too much even for the most determined students. The two lingerers chartered a cab and drove off. Jowett watched them depart and remarked, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Jowett's scholarship was impugned by some, and not least by Cambridge men, who delighted to discover, in the mellifluous English of his Thucydides, minute lapses or actual errors. There were others who also were accused, whether rightly or wrongly, of looking learned without being so. One gentleman was always boasting of having been mentioned in Germany. A conjecture of his had been noted in the *Rheinische Museum* or some equally portentous journal. At last one of the junior dons, tired of the constant allusions to this distinction, took the pains to look through the German periodical. The professor was indeed mentioned, but with a scorn which the Teutonic pundit could not express without doing violence to the Latin language. The conjecture, he said, had been hazarded *valde perperam, nimissime ineptissime*.

Some, indeed, could hardly be called even pretenders. One tutor was still, almost without concealment, lecturing on logic from the notes he had taken as an undergraduate. The candid confession of another, when supposed to be instructing men in Plato, was "Well, I can see you have read all this since I have"; and a lazy young scholar, who had done but half of a philosophical essay for this same

don, got through by reading the few pages he had written, and then reading them, with slight verbal alterations, a second time. But these were very rare : survivors of a past age. There were many whose scholarship was astonishingly profound, and who were constantly increasing it. Some had a real European reputation and deserved it. Among these was Robinson Ellis, the editor of Catullus, who was said to be so strongly steeped in Latin as to have almost forgotten English ; he knew all about the Tiber, but had, it was averred, never seen either the Isis or the Cherwell. Like Roger Bacon and other profound students of old, he was suspected of atheism, probably quite unjustly.

Of an entirely different class, but no less erudite, was Henry John Stephen Smith, whom I should be inclined to call the greatest intellect I have ever known. I had but a short time in which to know him, for he died, in the fullness of his powers, in my second term. He was one of Arnold's latest pupils, and came up to Balliol knowing just as much mathematics as Arnold's pupils usually knew—that is, nothing. Needless to say, he was Ireland scholar in classics, and that though for his first few terms he was able to work only three hours a day. After this, some accident drew him to mathematics. The story ran that he was asked to lunch by a mathematical friend. The friend was late, and Smith took up one of his class-books, on Conic Sections, which he read with intense interest, as if it had been a novel, finding in it, like Pascal,

things he had thought but never read before. When the man came in, Smith said, "I wish you'd lend me that delightful book." "Delightful?" said the man—"you're the first I ever heard call it that. Take it by all means, and if you keep it for ever I shan't much mind." Be this story true or not, within two years Smith was Senior Mathematical scholar. Ere long his name was known both at home and abroad as that of one of the greatest mathematicians of his time; though, as is so often the case, his audience was inevitably few; his work was so recondite that only about a dozen people in Europe could understand it. He was chiefly famous, in this sense, for his investigations in the most refined and abstract of all sciences, the Theory of Numbers. I believe his Report on this theory is still a standard work.

But what struck me more than even his immense mental powers was his sympathy with the weak. On more than one occasion I stayed behind after his lectures on Geometry to ask him to make some point clear. Nothing could exceed his kindness. There was no suggestion that anyone who could not see at a glance a thing so obvious must belong to the lowest stratum of humanity. He sat down, went through each step of the argument, and ended by apologising for not having been equally lucid during the lecture.

His wit was as keen as his mathematical ability. He was a Liberal, and when Gathorne Hardy was standing against Gladstone for the University, he

acted as a teller for the votes, which were then given orally. A country clergyman came in, and in his excitement said, "I vote for Glad—I mean Ardy." "I claim that vote," said Smith. "But I never finished the first name." "You never began the other."

When he died, he had a curious epitaph. The most rapid lecturer in Oxford happened to be taking a class on the morning of the funeral. He was a conscientious man. "I shall have to leave twenty minutes earlier than usual," said he, "in order to pay the last tribute of respect to Professor Henry Smith. But I shall try to give you an hour's lecture in the forty minutes." He started off at once, therefore, and, at a pace nearly double his usual gallop, rushed through his subject, while the chalk in his hand raced like an excited planchette-pencil over the blackboard. His pupils, after vainly trying to keep up with him, renounced the contest and watched the prestidigitator in fascinated amazement, as many of them had, a year or two earlier, watched Maskelyne at the Egyptian Hall.

I still have a book that once belonged to Henry Smith; and I am still proud to have known him, if only as one of his feeblest pupils.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A story of Smith's amazing powers was told me which, if not literally true, represents what might easily have happened. Five or six great mathematicians used to meet, at intervals of a few months, to talk over their ideas. At one meeting Cayley read out a proposition which he had recently discovered, the mere enunciation of which would fill a page of this book. Smith listened attentively, and then, without using pen or paper, thought silently for ten minutes. "I think," said he at last, "you will find that proposition a particular case of the following." He then repeated his enlarged form of the proposition; and, to the astonishment of all, he proved to be right.



## AS I REMEMBER

Some of the curiosities of the forties still lingered on in my time. There was Mark Pattison, at last, though too late, Rector of Lincoln, and cherishing a grudge against the destiny which had deprived him of the post twenty years before: a miracle of knowledge, but a lion who rarely left his den. His counsel to men who wanted to write a book would thin our bookshelves. "First, read your author carefully through twenty times; then read all the authors who may in any way have influenced him three or four times; then reflect; then write; then revise; finally, if you think it worth while, publish."

There was an ancient sage (I will call him John Richards), perhaps eighty years old, the mere sight of whom was enough to set one thinking of the next world. Dean Burgon, who cared nothing for the conventions, was once preaching on sanctity in the University Church. "If you want to know what sanctity is," said he, "go and call on John Richards, and talk with him for half an hour." Some people took the Dean's advice and profited accordingly. John's courtesy, like his sanctity, was old-world. He was polite to everybody, and always hopeful, however desperate the case might be. A murderer was to be hanged in Oxford jail, and the chaplain was ill. They sent for John Richards. He came, knocked gently at the cell-door, and in response to a "Come in," entered delicately. "Mr. Jones, I believe?" said he, holding out his hand. "That is my name." "Mr. Jones the murderer?" "I am sorry to say, yes." "Well, Mr. Jones, I

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should not worry about that; we all have our trials and our peccadilloes; but if we apologise, they're generally forgiven. I understand that it will be all over early to-morrow?" "That's true." "Well, as I say, do not be anxious: these things *will* happen. Good-bye; we shall meet again shortly." I have my doubts about this story; it is too like the accounts of the dreams of men just before they are guillotined: but, from what I knew of the old gentleman, it is not an *impossible* tale.

And then there were what may be called the visiting Professors. There was Freeman, looking like Gray's Bard—

*Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
Streamed like a meteor to the troubled air :*

and he was Bard-like also in the prophetic fury of his denunciations. "He lets you know what he thinks," said a man after hearing one of Freeman's lectures. "He lets you know what he thinks of *you*, if you don't agree with him," was the reply, from a man who on one occasion had not agreed with him. I tremble to think what he would have said if he had known that Froude would succeed him. But he was not always denouncing. In his inaugural lecture he panegyrised Arnold, and, heedless of Thorold Rogers's sarcasm,

*Whilst, ladling butter from alternate tubs,  
Stubbs butters Freeman, Freeman butters Stubbs,*

he gave Stubbs several eulogistic pats.

There was Ruskin, doing his second turn as Slade Professor of Fine Art. His first lecture was nearly fatal to him; for a hall had been provided which was not nearly large enough; and the lecturer had to come in by the same door as the hearers. He emerged from a crowd of undergraduates like a half drowned rat. "Is this young Oxford?" he was heard to murmur: "if so, I don't like it." But his later lectures, which were not so crowded, were delightful. To one of them he brought fifty of Kate Greenaway's pictures, and passed them round the audience: to another, a score of Randolph Caldecott's; and it was charming to hear the simple words of admiration, or rather of affection, with which he spoke of them. The critic was forgotten in the enjoyer; and he made us enjoy them.

But of all these Professorial inaugural scenes I recall most vividly one in which Burdon-Sanderson was concerned. All necessary funds had been voted for him except the final £400: and on this point all the anti-vivisectors concentrated their forces. The vote was to be taken in the Sheldonian, and few University football matches can have been more fully attended. Jowett presided, the Proctors were there, and, as Virgil might have put it, all who were present and hundreds besides. The meeting was one great roar: you had the curious sight of orators gesticulating but being totally unable to make their words audible. Freeman's beard waved more frantically than ever; but on *this* occasion he could not let you know what he thought. At last some

Stentor among the undergraduates demanded and secured a hearing for Canon Liddon; and after him Jowett's thin voice was heard asking for attention to another clergyman. But this speaker ruined his own cause. He began with the words, "Nineteen hundred years ago there was a Great Physician in Galilee"—and instantly his voice was drowned in a howl of execration; there was to be no theology in this debate: and there was noise in the Theatre for the space of half an hour. Amid it all, I watched Burdon-Sanderson, sitting calm on tumult's wheel, like Farinata amid the flames, "as if he held all hell in great disdain": his look seemed to show that he despised equally his bigoted opponents and his noisy supporters. What he wanted, clearly, was to be left alone and get on with his work.

At last, but how I do not know, the inaudible speeches were brought to an end, and a vote was taken. There was silence to hear the result. When the Proctors announced that Sanderson had got his money, the cheers and counter-cheers, though hoarse, almost raised the roof.

As I passed out, I happened to be close to the gentleman who had talked of the Great Physician. It was a dangerous neighbourhood; for another clergyman, of the hostile faction, espied him, and clenching his fist, roared out, "You introduced religion into it, sir!" Fortunately the swaying crowd drew me from my place "between the pass and fell incensed points" of these mighty opposites. Is there any question to-day which could arouse such fury?

There were also the preachers, of whom there was then a great company. You could hear, in St. Mary's or elsewhere, half the orators of the Established Church; real eloquence from Boyd Carpenter or Liddon; admirable thought from Illingworth; sound sense from Abbott of the City of London School; argument from Farrar of Durham, who apologised for bringing Bœotian ideas to Athens. Knox (*et præterea*) Little also appeared occasionally. He was said to provide more words for a single idea than any other Anglican preacher. I heard him more than once, and—though his *vox* was charming—I think the verdict was just. One sermon I wish I had heard; but I heard *of* it from a good mimic. Little was the adored of girls, who came to his discourses with pencils and note-books, to take down the oracles verbatim. “Life,” cried the preacher, “if the metaphor be not too daring——” Down went every word. “Life, my brethren, if I may be pardoned the expression——” Down went that also. “Life, my brethren, as philosophers have observed——” This too was carefully committed to paper. Three more of these preliminary clauses followed, all eagerly preserved for posterity; and then finally the predicate: “Life, my brethren, is a battle.”

A Head of a College, not so practised a preacher as Knox Little, had, so it was said, one sermon only in his repertoire: this he had composed for a congregation of villagers in the Isle of Wight. The time came round when he had to preach to the undergraduates

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of his college. Why go through the toil of preparing a special discourse? He drew the old one from his desk. All went well for a few minutes; and then came the fatal sentence: "Those of you who are mothers." There was a slight perturbation in the audience. The preacher, sensitive to his surroundings, felt that he had said something not altogether appropriate. He hastened to emend his reading. "I mean those of you who will be."

Already Dr. Spooner—then plain Mr.—had given vent to the single Spoonerism of his lifetime, which, multiplied by scores of ingenious undergraduates, became, like Isaiah's "little one," a thousand, and made him immortal. A clever undergraduate actor at a college literary society, donning a grey wig to represent Mr. Spooner's albino hair, and hitting off to perfection the well-known tones, produced twenty carefully invented Spoonerisms which kept his audience in constant laughter. This, I think, was the real start of the Spooner vogue. If I remember rightly, it was then that we first heard the statement that Esau sold his birthright for a pot of message, as well as the Spoonerite version of the cat that dropped on its paws. I often think the fate of Dr. Spooner is one of the strongest proofs that little causes may have great results.

Heads of colleges, dignified as they were, offered fair game for the anecdotist. There was one who had been a Head Master, and retained something of the pedagogic style. He asked a freshman to breakfast. The young man was late. "Punctuality is a virtue,"

remarked the Head. "Sorry, sir," said the easy-going youth; "I overslept myself. But I did my best: I omitted my tub." (A cold bath in the morning was then *de rigueur*.) "When I was your age I *never* omitted the bath, winter or summer." "Ah, but I should think old age has put an end to that!" Another freshman was more timid. His Head was deaf. Asked to breakfast, the man was tongue-tied, and the more so as his remarks on the weather were answered with observations on freshers. At last he thought he had a chance. A beautiful Persian cat appeared. "What lovely fur that cat has got," he said. "I beg your pardon." "What lovely fur that cat has got"—in a louder tone, but still inaudible. "I beg your pardon." "What lovely fur that cat has got"—in a roar. The Head looked disappointed; he had expected, after all his efforts, something more profound.

Like violets, hidden by the mossy stone of their colleges, some Fellows worked quietly and almost invisibly. It was thus with Lewis Carroll, the Rev. Charles Dodgson, who was well known by sight, but was shy and retiring, and came very rarely into public meetings: and it was thus, I think, with Walter Pater, whose repute in the world outside contrasted strangely with his shyness in Oxford. In my time, indeed, he did little but write. After giving a scholarship to a man named Sanctuary "because he liked the name," he rarely examined. Others, steady and persistent students, made themselves known at a distance by emendations contributed

to the classical reviews. Reluctantly they emerged for dinner, and filled conscientiously college or University offices; but their real work was study. Such was one I have in mind, who—because of his retiring ways—was suspected of being at best a Positivist. Much against his will, when the turn of his college came round, he became, from a strong sense of duty, Proctor: and Proctors were expected to attend the University sermon. Nearly the whole college turned up at St. Mary's to see the result; and they were rewarded; for it was plain the Proctor had no notion where he ought to sit. The story went round that he had to be guided to his place, and one of his pupils declared that he himself was the guide.

Proctors, like Masters, had to endure apocryphal stories. There was one story, from the distant past, of a Proctor's meeting a kind of Mrs. Malaprop with her nephew, who was not in academic dress. "Are you a member of this University?" asked the official. "Remember you in your adversity!" answered the lady, "of course I will"; and pressed a shilling into his reluctant palm.

Proctors met, in actual fact, undergraduates as eccentric as Mrs. Malaprop herself. A youth, well known by sight to everybody, was said to possess, like Samson, thirty changes of raiment, each as many-coloured as Joseph's coat. Clothed only in one of these conspicuous garments, with no gown to conceal it, he fell in with the Proctor, who happened to be his own tutor. "Sorry to have to ask *you* to call



on me to-morrow," said the tutor. "Oh, don't apologise, don't apologise; I'm only too glad to give you an opportunity of vindicating the law."

As this is a digressive chapter, I may perhaps pass from Oxford to Cambridge, and tell an anecdote about Charles Kingsley which the Master of Trinity loved to repeat. He had had it from Kingsley himself, and said it did not lose by the stammer which Kingsley never overcame. I heard it at a Magdalene dinner, where half the University was present. "It was the fifth of November, in days before you, Mr. Proctor, had reduced the University to its present order. Your distinguished fellow-collegian, Charles Kingsley, was among the crowd, and the disturbance was great. At that moment, my own distinguished predecessor, Dr. Whewell, who was then Proctor, appeared with his appointed myrmidons to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm. A butcher, alas, had no respect for authority, and actually raised his fist to assault my distinguished predecessor; but Kingsley, putting into action those principles of muscular Christianity which he afterwards exemplified in his life and his books, was too quick for the assailant. He raised *his* fist, and with one well-directed blow levelled the butcher with the ground. Then my distinguished predecessor, turning a stern gaze upon his deliverer, observed grimly, "Young man, you are without academic dress."

Proctors are, I believe, less severe on mufti than they used to be; and top-hats on Sundays, which

were almost universally worn in my time, have altogether disappeared. A less strict régime, I understand, prevails in general intercourse. But even then there was a certain amount of freedom and ease: the younger dons would mingle naturally with their pupils, accept invitations to breakfast, and talk—usually about cricket or football—with them. I recall a case of dissatisfaction with the college food which was easily settled by a private conversation, conducted largely in slang, between the Junior Bursar and the college boat-captain.

Things were, as a rule, orderly and decorous. "Wines" were fewer and less noisy than they had been in Ruskin's time, when he had to save himself by emptying his glass surreptitiously into his waistcoat. One rowdy feast did attract my notice; but the occasion was exceptional. In those days men constantly came up without having passed their Smalls or Littlego; in fact, some colleges did not send men down till they had failed for the fourth or fifth time. The man above me was one of these geniuses. He determined to celebrate his departure by asking a score of his friends to a wine. About twelve o'clock the din became appalling; it was as great as that we had experienced a short time before, when the college had made several bumps and "gentlemen were requested to come in force on to the quadrangle, each with his tub and a boot"; the object being to beat the tub with the boot until one or other was vanquished. So now. Crash after crash resounded, and I half expected

the ceiling to come down. In the morning the scout asked me if I would like to see Mr. Jones's rooms. I went up and found the floor covered with broken glass and swimming with wine. Those were the days when huge mirrors were considered an ornament, and Mr. Jones had one which almost covered a whole wall. This had now not a square inch of glass left. I could only imagine that the guests, seeing their own faces in it, had "despised their image," and thrown their wine-glasses at it. The floor reminded one of Revelation; it was a crystal sea. I have heard of few parallels to this disturbance, though I imagine that one, which took place in the fifties at Queen's, must have come not far short of it. A man had gained a First Class, and celebrated the feat by a Trimalchio feast. In the morning, the Provost, Thomson, afterwards Archbishop of York, sent for him. Thomson, as everybody knew, had himself taken only a Third. "There was a great noise in your room last night; what was the reason?" "Well, sir, I was celebrating my First Class." "And what is there in a First Class to justify such a disturbance?" "What do *you* know of the feelings of a man who has got a First Class?"

Another convulsion was more in the nature of a duel. In a college there was a Blue-Ribbonite, who wore the then well-known azure badge denoting that, like Jonadab the son of Rechab, he tasted neither wine nor strong drink. His next-door neighbour, who held opposite opinions, having dined too well, conceived the thought (if that is the correct

expression for a somewhat hazy cerebral disturbance) of making an attack upon the teetotaller's rooms. The oak was "sporting"; but so vigorous was his assault that he broke the panel with a *coup de pied*. Here was the opportunity for total abstinence. As the foot came through, the besieged man, with a dexterous throw of a lasso which he had prepared, secured it, and pulled vigorously, with the result that the assailant was soon helpless on the floor. Like Polyphemus he howled for help; but the neighbours, though they came out in response to his cries, were as indifferent as the Cyclopes, and, considering that he had met his deserts, left him to his fate. He lay there, accordingly, until after two or three hours sobriety returned, when a treaty, dictated by the enemy and ratified by solemn oaths, was concluded. The peace thus gained was, I believe, faithfully kept.

In one respect at least, I imagine, the undergraduate of that time exactly resembled his successor. In public or private debate, in the Union or in Hall, a paradox or an epigram was pursued with more eagerness than a logical argument. A man could make a reputation by skilfully maintaining an apparently indefensible position. I remember one who lived for some time on the glory of having defended with ingenuity the thesis that the Lord's Prayer was too diffuse: and another who, with well-feigned seriousness, contended that the Mohammedan quaternion of wives was preferable to the Christian unity. The husband could rule, like the

Romans, by setting his enemies to quarrel with one another. But still more conducive to repute was the personal "score." If, in a contest, you could, even with total disregard of relevance to the actual matter in hand, make your adversary ridiculous, you were secure of applause: you were "brilliant," and that was enough. More than one man gained the Presidency of the Union by this kind of ability: a readiness in retort, especially if spiced with a little venom, was certain to attract a large audience and to gain the votes of those who had not suffered by it.

And lastly, can it be that the most stable and conservative of all institutions has altered like others? Are the scouts still as they were, or has Time written a wrinkle even on their placid brows? I should like to think that the Senior Scout of my college still survives, he who equalled in grace and dignity Dr. Liddell himself, and was constantly mistaken by strangers for the Warden. A model of courtesy, he guided freshmen gently and kindly in the way they should go, never presuming, imperceptibly checking presumption. Scouts, like other human beings, have their differences, which, perhaps, are as clearly marked to-day as ever. Some are, I suppose, paternal to their masters, others dictatorial, others grovelling. One I recall who had his master well under his thumb. "You can have the rest of that mutton," said the young man. "Oh, no, sir, I don't care for that; but the tongue you had yesterday was excellent." All extremes, in fact, from an honesty as conspicuous as Mr. Baldwin's to a

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rapacity like that of Front de Bœuf, were to be found in this class, externally so similar. There were, I believe, among them, as in the world at large, differences even of religious belief. I knew one who was a sound Catholic—but I found this out by the merest accident. Another, a Christchurch institution, after living, without knowing it, as a Voltairian, became a Methodist, and spoke of his experiences in a love-feast. "It isn't learning that does it," said he; "here had I been connected with this University for thirty years, and never knew religion till the other day."

As I look back on these times, I feel that I owe much to my tutors, much to the preachers, much to my fellow-undergraduates; but if I were asked to whom I owe most, I am not sure that I shouldn't say, "To Charles my scout and John his boy"—if my gratitude to the landlady I had in my last year be not even keener and better deserved. When I engaged the rooms, her husband promised to be a mother to me. His wife fulfilled the promise.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HYPOCRISY

OF ALL THE CHARGES brought against the Victorian age, I suppose the most persistent, and the hardest to rebut, is that of hypocrisy. I have already alluded incidentally to this accusation; but the subject deserves, I think, to be considered more minutely. For if the charge is false, it is certain that we are totally misunderstanding our grandfathers; and if it is in any measure true, we must know how true it is, in what way it is true, and why it is true.

The charge is hard to rebut because it is so vague: it is like the ghost of old Hamlet, as the air invulnerable, and our vain blows are mockery. "'Tis here, 'tis here, 'tis gone." I have yet to learn precisely what hypocrisy is, and I do not know that in the full sense of the word any human being is, or ever was, a hypocrite: in any case nothing short of omniscience can venture to speak with certainty. To be an out and out hypocrite you must know you are one: but those who play the Pecksniffian humbug without at least in part deceiving themselves are, I am convinced, either non-existent or excessively rare. If we consider our own conduct, I think we shall recognise that, at the moment before we have acted wrongly, we have contrived to acquire the

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feeling that on *this* occasion, and in *these* circumstances, we are in the right. The same thing is true of more famous and consistent hypocrites. We have the highest authority for believing in the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees; and yet, as I go back into the mists of memory, I recall an admirable discourse by James Mozley, in which he pointed out with great force that they did not *know* they were hypocrites: they sincerely thought themselves sincere; and even Caiaphas, to whom Dante assigns the lowest place in his leaden-cloaked throng, uttered his famous dictum in perfect honesty. Not, I am sure, till the *Frati Godenti*, whom Dante places next to Caiaphas, found themselves in hell, did they recognise that they were anything but the most open and above-board of Florentines. Could we meet Tartuffe and Chadband in real life, we should be compelled to admit that their hypocrisy, though huge, was unconscious. They harboured, in fact, what Plato called the Lie in the Soul; and that lie masquerades most skilfully as truth.

Again, there is no vice which, while in some cases harder to detect, is easier to impute. One remembers that George Whitefield, who assuredly had as little of it as most people, was the model of Foote's play *The Hypocrite*, and was travestied by that clever mimic on the stage. We may constantly, when dealing with men whose ways are unconventional, be making the mistake of Foote.

On the other hand, can we uncompromisingly assert that there is anywhere a single person



*entirely* free from this most subtle and elusive vice? We all practise it, and our purest and most candid actions are touched with it. Human motives are invariably mixed, and even the most simple and saintly actions often involve a *slight* glance at the approval of others. I should imagine that the most convinced Catholic would admit that St. Thomas of Canterbury, in his macerations and asceticisms, had *some* thought of the popular admiration he would gain by them. It used in Victorian days, as I well remember, to be often asked how George Eliot could draw so accurate a picture of the self-deceptions of Bulstrode. The answer is plain, and it involves no censure of her: she looked into her own heart, and perceived there the germs of Bulstrode's failing. There, but for the grace of Strauss and Comte, would go Mary Ann Evans.

I shall therefore make no attempt to deny that the Victorians had their share of the Pharisaic weakness, any more than I shall deny that, as it was an innate and not an acquired quality, they have transmitted it, in altered form, to their descendants. I do not forget, either, that the charge of hypocrisy is made, not merely against Victorian England, but, by foreigners, against England as a whole. To quote an absurd poem of the sixties, in the view of a European all British hearts wear a mask, which it breaks his own to see. Rightly or wrongly we believe that this foreign accusation is mistaken. We are hypocrites only as all men are hypocritical; and I believe that the accusation

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brought against the Victorians is true only so far as it is true of any age one likes to mention.

It is of course the "Puritans" who are in the main the objects of this particular censure. As with their Commonwealth ancestors, "hypocrisy and nonsense had got the advowson of their conscience," and the conscience of Nonconformists and Evangelicals was remarkably alive to the delinquencies of others. They were also, so it is said, given to imagining that it was sufficient to present a façade of virtue to the world so long as the inner corruption was kept hidden. In fact, if, like Barnes Newcome, they kept their sepulchre scrupulously whited, the dead bones did not matter.

I am not concerned to deny the impeachment. Then, as now, the great crime was to be found out. I have already shown that many of the leading men of the time professed a religion in which they did not believe; and I confess that there were probably many men who kept up double establishments and were duly shocked when others were discovered doing precisely the same thing. Among the myriads who exhausted themselves in vituperating Dilke and Parnell, there were great numbers of men quite well known to be guilty of the same offence, and there must have been many men who were guilty without being known, exactly as there were many whose beliefs differed little from Bradlaugh's, and who yet expressed loudly their horror at Bradlaugh's atheism. There was also a good deal of humbug, at once ridiculous and squalid, in what

Charles Reade called the "prurient prudery" of wide circles of society: and there is something as unpleasant in the studied reticence of certain Victorian novels as in the sniggering lubricity of *Tristram Shandy* itself. Many writers of that time give one the impression that they could if they would; and their Pharisaic priggishness is a transparent disguise for something much worse than plain speaking. All this is true; to confess it is simply to own that the Victorians were a vast population of human beings, many of them, as must be the case in all large multitudes, no better than they should be, but conforming to the conventions of their time.

Let us not forget, however, that there were plenty of people in Victoria's days who showed exactly that hypocrisy of vice which is so common to-day, and which is at least as nauseous as its virtuous analogue. I remember many occasions on which I heard a man complacently say, "I am no Puritan," and smugly look round for approval of his honesty. Sometimes I was pretty sure that he was not half so immoral as he wished to be thought; as a schoolboy, who "saps" or "fags" in secret, pretends never to open a book. I was indeed often reminded, when I heard this sort of talk, of a boy I knew who, when detected in a serious offence, tried to take credit for the fact that he was not "pi." This was his only merit.

Among the professing Christians I knew, so far as I could judge, the sincerity was often as nearly

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complete as fallen humanity can easily achieve. There were, of course, "shady" men, whose practice was in sad contrast to their precepts. One minister, whose preaching was eloquent and vigorous, was certainly in private a gay Lothario: another was as fondly devoted to the whisky bottle as, in the lying legend, General Gordon was said to be. A third, whose professions of extreme sanctity were worthy of an old Antinomian, was a scandal-monger of the deepest dye. A fourth wrote a letter, which I saw, to a distinguished and influential minister of his denomination saying, "If you don't secure me a good church and a wealthy congregation, I will spend my whole life in doing you as much harm as I can." But these were exceptions; and in almost every case such men were either compelled to resign, or quietly removed from active work.

There was also a less harmful kind of hypocrisy—the pretence to learning to which the pretender had no real claim. If actual learning was too difficult of attainment, the label might easily be secured: an M.A. or a D.D. from an American "University"—not Yale or Harvard—could be got by payment. I knew a man whose wife was ambitious of this distinction for her husband. On coming down to breakfast on the anniversary of his wedding-day, he found, on removing the cover from his plate, not the expected kidneys and bacon, but a parchment informing him that he was now an M.A. of an institution in Illinois of which he had scarcely

heard the name. *Dux femina facti*: thenceforward he was enrolled in the ranks of scholars.

On the other hand, real scholars, as usual, were modest. But if, as not infrequently happened, a popular preacher went to America, he found it exceedingly difficult to avoid receiving academical honours from his hospitable friends, who showered degrees upon him almost as generously as they plied him with table delicacies. Politeness demanded that these favours should not be too contemptuously rejected: and many men, much against their will, were constrained to wear decorations to which their humility thought they had no real claim. Such a badge was forced upon the famous John Clifford, who had no need of any recognition of the kind: he was scholarly enough, and had plenty of well-earned degrees: but his American doctorate was not forgotten by his opponents when, in 1902, he took a prominent part in the controversy on Balfour's Education Bill. Others managed to conceal the dubious honour. At least two eminent ministers of my acquaintance, one in particular a man of the highest culture—a favourite pupil of Augustus Wilkins at Manchester—urbanely accepted the diploma, but packed it away in their travelling-bag, and hid it as carefully as Schiller hid his patent of nobility.

Many laymen showed a similar reticence in a different field. They gave liberally but anonymously, and did good by stealth after the fashion of old Ralph Allen, though they found no Pope to praise

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them. They were quiet and retiring: even the present generation could detect little hypocrisy under their unassuming manner. They were unconscious alike of their own goodness and of the weaknesses of others. You never heard them discussing faults, while they seemed always pleased to discover merits; and, so far from showing the oily complacency of which "Puritans" are accused, they provided things pleasantly and serenely honest in the sight of all men.

As to cases in which a man combined public virtue with private "immorality," I do not think they were more numerous or more flagrant than now, or among "Puritans" than among people of other persuasions. In the case of clergy and ministers, who are often so severely judged, it seems to me that it is too easy to forget the peculiar temptations to which they are exposed. Our "Bishops and curates" have to tread very warily among the congregations committed to their charge, and the more eloquent and attractive they are, the more subtle and dangerous are their trials. Not Mario or Liszt was ever more run after by enthusiastic women than are some eminent preachers: nor are carpet-slippers the only tokens of embarrassing devotion they receive. The following tragic story will do as an example of many.<sup>1</sup> A young, handsome, and eloquent minister was engaged to

<sup>1</sup> I could parallel it with another about a professor of music and one of his *schwärmend* girl pupils. The professor, in this case, escaped, "yet so as by fire." Doubtless the reader's own knowledge will supply him with more of a similar kind.

preach at some distance from his home, and was to stay the night at the home of a certain widower, whose daughter had conceived a *grande passion* for the young man. After the service he was met by the daughter, who was driving a trap, and brought her father's apologies for not coming himself. When they reached the place, he found the servants absent, and the father not there. He felt he ought to hurry away, but hardly saw how he could retreat without discourtesy. What followed may be described, with hardly the alteration of a syllable, in the words of the Book of Proverbs. The whole thing had been skilfully planned. "So she caught him and kissed him, and said unto him, This day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us solace ourselves with loves; for the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey, he hath taken a bag of money with him." As with the Biblical youth, so with this one: "with her much fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him away." Morning came; in an agony of remorse he fled from the house, and that very day wrote a confession to his superiors, resigning his ministry and going out into the world.

Many of my readers will doubtless think that the young man was too conscientious; and it is possible to hold that he might have remained in the Church. Had he done so, few, I think, would have accused him of hypocrisy. If he had been older, with wife

and children dependent on him, none, I believe, would have expected him to resign.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of *doctrinal* hypocrisy—of men preaching what they did not believe—were, I am certain, very rare. I once ventured to ask an old minister whether he ever doubted the creed he proclaimed. “Never in the pulpit,” he answered with a disarming smile. “I sometimes doubt in the study; but when I have my congregation before me I am absolutely sure.” We then went on to talk of Luther’s hesitations and uncertainties, which he ascribed to the temptations of Satan, and which never troubled him when the zest of battle seized him: and of the daring advice of Keble to Arnold—not yet Arnold of Rugby—“Settle your doubts about the Trinity, once for all, by taking orders.”

This advice turned out successfully enough with Arnold. I knew other cases where similar advice only just escaped being fatal. One Sunday evening I listened, with great interest, to a sermon from a very talented and eloquent theological student. He had not gone far before I recognised the sermon. Apart from the text, it was word for word the same as a sermon by the famous American preacher Horace Bushnell,<sup>2</sup> whose writings were then well known in Evangelical circles. But even Bushnell himself could hardly have delivered the discourse

<sup>1</sup> That once-famous book, *The Silence of Dean Maitland*, treats of a similar incident. The case in *The Scarlet Letter*, or that in Lockhart’s *Adam Blair*, is essentially different.

<sup>2</sup> Bushnell’s *Vicarious Sacrifice*, a theological treatise, made some stir. It based the Atonement on sympathy, and was by some people regarded as heretical.



with more force or effect. When the service was over, the deacons and several others rushed to the vestry to congratulate "their young friend." I was, as I say, interested in this business, and made some quiet enquiries at the College where the young man was studying. I found that he had been quite capable of making excellent sermons of his own, and that the professors regarded him as the most promising of their pupils. But, as I heard, not from the professors but from one of his fellow-students, he had lately begun to doubt. To write out and learn, as *his own* thoughts, Christian doctrines, became almost impossible, and he had therefore taken to preaching the words of others, with a sort of idea that he might be able to throw on to a Bushnell or a Robertson of Brighton the responsibility for them. He no longer preached; he recited. But later, even this subterfuge became intolerable. He sat up a whole night, and forced himself to make a sermon of his own. In the morning he read it to the friend who told me the story. "What do you think of that?" said he, when he had finished. "Splendid," answered his companion: "I wish I had your gifts." "Then," said he, "I don't believe one damned word of it"—tore up the manuscript, and threw it into the fire. The college term ended in a week: he stayed on, though restless, during those few days, and never returned after the vacation.

This young man, fortunately for himself, had a business in which he could find a post, and had

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little need to fret about his future: but there were other cases in which the anxiety must have been terrible. Readers of that once enormously popular book, *Robert Elsmere*, will remember how Mrs. Humphry Ward saves her hero from half the real tragedy of his final decision by giving him fifteen hundred a year of private means, and, if I remember aright, the same was the happy position of another Late Victorian doubter, John Ward, Preacher. But I have still vividly before my mind the picture of a man of forty, with wife and two children, who had entered the ministry in happy confidence at twenty-three, and now found his belief gradually failing. The struggle was almost visible in his face, and was indeed painful. Like Arthur Hallam, "he fought his doubts," but unlike him, gathered no strength. More and more "perplexed in faith," he found it quite impossible to "beat his music out." But he had no private income, and the prospect of a refuge outside his church was remote. To resign was to exchange security for uncertainty, and a small but sufficient living for the real danger of starvation. What added to his trouble was the impossibility of making the few friends to whom he confided his difficulties understand them. The hard-headed men thought him a fool to imperil his position for mere fantastic scruples; and to the truly religious the doubts were sins, to be crushed down. At length he made the plunge, and followed, in the scorn of consequence, what he held to be right. Even now I feel a glow of admiration for the courage and

honesty of this man. About him, at any rate, there was very little hypocrisy.

Not that a charitable judgment will be hasty to condemn those—and they were not few—who, having been entangled at an early age in the meshes of thirty-nine or more Articles, decided, after long searchings of heart, to stay where they were, and, ignoring the dogmas they had discarded, teach the remnants they still believed. It is a poor business for those who have never been faced with so terrible a dilemma, to fling at such men the cheap sneer of “hypocrisy.”

At this point, perhaps, a story of a different kind may be found more or less relevant. It is also of interest as throwing light on the characters of some well-known personages.

In the forties there was a somewhat distinguished Nonconformist minister, a good scholar, and a Doctor of Divinity. His sincerity and piety were beyond suspicion. He had, perhaps, a slight weakness, he was fond of a glass of wine, and occasionally of more than one. But this did not tell against him in those days, when chapels were often deliberately built close to the public-house, in order that the preacher might have due refreshment before and after the exertions of the service, and when a Nonconformist minister of eminence openly declared that so-called Temperance men should not bully him into teetotalism. Wine was the gift of God, and he was going to accept the gift with gratitude.

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But what marked this particular minister specially among his fellows was an extraordinary likeness. He was the "very spit" of George IV, and it was more than whispered that he was of royal descent. He was, in fact, the result of an adventure of George's attractive youth, when he had made conquests everywhere. The mother, a country girl of low rank, had been carried away by the charm of the handsome and gallant boy. But she had afterwards been converted, had married an honest man of her own class, and had brought up her son in the tenets of her church. She had contrived to give him a good education, and, as we have seen, he had ultimately entered the ministry, and had attained considerable repute in his denomination. But his royal descent could no more be concealed than that of Romulus or Remus. People, quite impervious to the ordinary attractions of the conventicle, began to hear of him; and it is said that some survivors of the old Carlton House or Brighton society came to his services. The ancient George Hangers must have been much amused when they heard the very sins of which the Regent had been guilty denounced in the exact tones and with the same gestures with which they had been familiar in the past. It was Don Juan come back from the grave, in the gown, and wearing the bands, of a revivalist. The comedy was irresistible; it was far better than a play performed by Charles Mathews himself.

At length the Prince Consort heard of it. He was

interested, and slightly conscience stricken. Not that he approved of the conduct of Victoria's uncles; they had certainly disregarded the decorum proper to royalty; nor had it been conducive to the honour of the Hanoverian dynasty when one of George III's sons, listening to the reading of the Ten Commandments, had proclaimed aloud which of them had been broken by his brothers. At the same time, the Prince felt that the children, though scarcely to be set in the Hanoverian *stemma*, ought to be decently provided for. He accordingly sent for the Doctor. He might have used the words of Olivia to Viola: "What is thy parentage?" and received the answer, "Above my fortunes, yet my state is well: I am a gentleman." At any rate, he told the Doctor that by some means or other, he knew the secret. "And," he added, "we do not think it right that you alone, among those who share your—what shall I say?—your illustrious misfortune, should be unprovided for. There is the Earl of Munster, there are the Fitz-Clarences: your claims are fully equal to theirs. I do not, of course, think of dukedoms like those of St. Albans or Berwick; those days are past: nor do I propose to act like the Emperor of the French with Walewski. But we must do what we can. You are, I think, in some sort of Holy Orders?"

"I am a Nonconformist minister."

"Ah." The Prince paused. "But that can be easily got over. Doubtless you would consent to take orders in the Church of England."

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"That, your Royal Highness, would require consideration."

"Oh, there is no hurry. But I might say that if you consent, a Bishopric—colonial in the first instance, but later in England—would be put at your disposal."

"I think, Sir," said the Doctor, "that I ought to make things perfectly clear. I thank your Royal Highness for your kind consideration; but I cannot deny that I am a firm and convinced believer in the tenets of my church, which rejects episcopacy altogether; and that therefore I could in no case accept your gracious offer. It would be a betrayal of my life-long principles."

The Prince, utterly astonished, was silent for a considerable time. He had never met anyone who could refuse a royal offer of advancement, especially when honestly and conscientiously made. He knew his own benevolent intentions, and did not believe that they could be misinterpreted.

"You understand," he said at length, "that you are destroying your chances of advancement?"

"Quite so, your Royal Highness, if by advancement is meant worldly success at the expense of an eternal hope."

"And there is no likelihood of your changing your mind?"

"None, Sir."

"Your decision is absolute and final?"

"Entirely so, Sir."

"Then there is no more to be said." The Prince

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motioned that the interview was over, kindly but sadly. He had failed in his attempt to do a benevolent deed. The Doctor departed, as confident that he had done right as the Prince that he had honestly tried to do so. He went back to his chapel, pondering many things. Not for years afterwards did he tell the story. I tell it as it was told to me.

It is only too easy, if we are so inclined, to "psycho-analyse" the motives of the Doctor. He may have been subconsciously influenced by spiritual pride, and have been a little vain of the strength of mind which enabled him to reject material advancement for spiritual gain. Doubtless many of the early Christian martyrs deliberately courted their fate largely from obstinacy and love of praise, and this Doctor may, among loftier feelings, have harboured something of that kind. But the simpler explanation is the truer one: so far as human motives are ever pure, this man's were honest and noble, free from self-seeking, and such as everyone, in his better moments, would wish to follow. Nor is it of any importance that his theological views were, conceivably, incorrect. What matters is that they were what he believed, and that he acted up to them.

If a man sincerely believes in his own religion he is not to be charged with hypocrisy because *you* do not believe in it. Nor is he hypocritical because the gestures, tones, or phrases he uses to express it are such as *you* would be a hypocrite to use. This is the error made by the Cavaliers in

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Commonwealth times, and by many since, with regard to the "Saints." The Biblical quotations, the peculiar language generally, it is hard for us to take as they were meant: they are not the phraseology in which we like to clothe our deepest feelings. But to take them as insincere is as foolish as to think a French child pedantic because he uses words our form of which is unnatural in an English child. I recall many such phrases, used by admirable men of an earlier generation, which to-day I could not hear without a shudder of repulsion. To them they were the natural mode of speech, as another mode—now sounding very curious—was natural to Sir Thomas More or Cranmer. I remember a little essay by a tiny patriotic schoolboy, which contained the dictum, "For *yes* the Germans say *Ja*, the Italians *si*, the French *oui*. The English alone get it right." Very similar is the mental attitude of those who fancy their way of uttering or concealing their religious feelings the only correct one.

Again, a man is not a hypocrite if, through the innate weakness of human nature, he fails at times to live up to his professions. He may be perfectly sincere though, after taking the Sacrament "in love and charity with his neighbours," he indulges shortly after in a human resentment against a fellow man who has injured him. As I look back, I remember many little words of impatience over trifles, and some bursts of passion, many hasty insincerities, and some instances of deliberate giving of



pain, which I judged severely as showing inconsistency with the Sabbath-vows and words used in family prayers. Burns, with all his hatred of the "*unco guid*," knew better. "What's done," he saw, "we partly may compute: we know not what's resisted": and he pleaded for a gentle scanning of our brother-man and sister-woman. I agree, to-day, with Burns. I saw these same men, so impatient over a trifle, bearing crushing misfortunes with Christian resignation; and I have known men who have been somewhat bitter over trivial slights, forgiving and forgetting great injuries, or even going out of their way to benefit their enemies; lending from scanty means and hoping for no return; occupying their prized leisure with philanthropies for which they rarely received anything but abuse; in fact living unostentatiously a life of good deeds and noble thoughts. What matter a few spots in the sun? Still less do a few eccentricities of manner detract from so lofty a character.

I offer then no unconditional defence. From Palmerston, who could conveniently forget the state of Ireland while lecturing foreign governments on their treatment of their minority-peoples, down to the Stigginses and Jellybys, a certain complacency was undoubtedly a feature of the times: much as the twentieth century, forgetting its own defects, loves to dwell on those of the nineteenth. It is, in fact, to speak paradoxically, the special characteristic of all generations. Every age is a Pharisee, going into the Temple and finding in its predecessor

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a publican as a foil to its own virtues: the Pharisee in its turn becomes a publican to its children: and every people delights to detect in some other a character of which it can loftily disapprove.

I should also admit that in many cases the Puritan—to use an inaccurate but convenient word—forgot the present world in his contemplation of the next. I have already mentioned the disgust of the Radicals of the twenties with the attitude of the Methodists towards political and social reform. “Why trouble about the misery of a few years? All will be made right in eternity.” This feeling was far from being confined to Puritans. Newman, though regretting Wesley’s “heresy,” praised him for practically, as Newman thought, disregarding this life in comparison with the other; and he held that St. Benedict was right in limiting his attention to the souls of men and neglecting their bodies. A different point of view was expressed by others. “What I dislike about Welsh Nonconformists,” said a Cardiff churchman—since then a man of very high distinction—to me in the eighties, “is this. They always look at us as if we had a higher social consideration in this world, but will be put neatly in our place in the next”; and there was something in what he said. There was certainly in these people a consciousness that Lazarus, when transported to Abraham’s bosom, would be able to find satisfaction in a superior glance at Dives across the gulf. But there was much to be said on the other side, which my friend passed over. There

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was less neglect of the problem of distress than either he or the reformers of 1820 imagined. Like General Booth later, the Methodists and their supporters thought social improvement impossible without religion; and they preached spiritual conversion, primarily it is true with a view to heaven, but largely with a view to worldly betterment. The one would secure the other. Convert a man, and you would, as a rule, make him a better citizen; make him sober, and you would add considerably to his effective income. Some of their efforts, started on these lines, had a success which might well confirm their belief. Long before Toynbee Hall and other missions were established, these men penetrated into the filthiest London slums, risking health and even life as intrepidly as a missionary in a cannibal island: they proclaimed the Evangelical gospel as the cure for all ills, and many of these dens of dirt and infamy were metamorphosed into homes of light, cleanliness, and comparative comfort.

Sometimes, indeed, this success was almost embarrassing. These preachers found, as Wesley had found before them, that they had but substituted one danger for another. "Religion," remarked Wesley, "brings punctuality, diligence, and temperance. Punctuality, diligence, and temperance bring competence or even wealth. Competence and wealth lead to worldliness." It was a vicious circle; but none the less the risk had to be faced, and it was again and again faced with courage and energy.

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It is not always, fortunately, that wealth brings worldliness. The camel sometimes gets through the needle's eye; and we must not forget the large number of men who, having obtained affluence, used their money for philanthropic ends. There were, in the Victorian age, many George Peabodys. It may be true that it is better to help people to help themselves than directly to help them; and there may also be something in the Socialist contention that the State knows better than the private man how to help people: but it is a feeble judgment which denies these benevolent men due credit for the way in which they regarded themselves as "stewards" and their wealth as a "trust." Not even in the seventeenth century were more schools, hospitals, libraries, and other institutions founded, endowed, or assisted than in the "hypocritical" nineteenth.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A STUDY OF WORDS

NO SAYING IS TRUER than the Biblical one, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"; and it applies not merely to individuals but to periods and societies. A trick of phraseology, trifling in itself, may do more to decide the status of a set of people than a moral defect. Men will forgive a fraud, but not a dropped aspirate, and a mispronunciation has sometimes determined matters of high policy. Joseph Chamberlain lost nothing, even when Colonial Secretary, by a frightful error as to the relative dates of the conquest of Canada and the American Revolution;<sup>1</sup> but, as we have seen already, Bright's ignorance as to the proper pronunciation of "Pytchley" did him more harm with the Tory squires than all his Radicalism. A mistake as to "Belvoir" or "Cholmondeley" has been known to have a similar result.<sup>2</sup> Not even the eating

<sup>1</sup> He thought the acquisition of Canada came about as a compensation for the loss of the thirteen colonies; whereas "every schoolboy knows" that, by removing the danger of French aggression, it was one of the main causes of the American revolt. Montcalm's prophecy, "If the English take Quebec, within twenty years they will have lost America," was almost exactly fulfilled.

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay's pronunciation of *Beaulieu* is remarkable in so accurate a man:

*O'er Longleat's towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks, the fiery herald flew,  
He roused the shepherds of Stonehenge, the rangers of Beaulieu.*

This is enough to show how stupid it is to rate people by their knowledge or ignorance of such trifles.

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of fish with a steel knife could more certainly mark a want of proper breeding than a mistake of this kind.

This phenomenon is seen everywhere. How many new boys at a public school have suffered untold misery through failing to use the school slang in the right fashion ! I knew a Head Master who a day or two after his first appearance was guilty of the phrase " Head Prefect " instead of the " Senior," to which the boys had been accustomed. He took a long time to get over the effects. Childish as this may seem, it is only an example of the way in which a word unfitly spoken may have unexpected power.

What this Head Master found has been the case, in a much more important sphere, with the Puritans of the Stuart times. Their Scriptural language set some people against them in their own day, and still perverts the judgment of ours. It is, nowadays, not the dialect of sincerity; and we find it hard to believe that men who used it were sincere. How could Cromwell be anything but a hypocrite when he told one Parliament that " he had sought the Lord night and day " before ordering in his veterans to turn it out into the street; or when he opened another by informing the members—somewhat hopefully—that " though they had been among the pots, they should be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold " ?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is only the Commonwealth way of saying what Mr. Harold Nicolson recently said in Parliament about the famous Peace Proposals. " I spent a sleepless night, wondering what in all honesty I ought to do, thinking in stress of conscience whether I ought not to resign my seat and return my mandate to those who had voted for me." Was Mr. Nicolson a hypocrite ?

It is true that this feeling is largely due to ignorance. "Puritan" language was less exclusively Puritan than is supposed. Many Cavaliers spoke in exactly the same style, and some of Charles I's letters, "on a forgotten matter," might be taken for Oliver's. To go back to an earlier time, let a man read any speech of Sir Thomas More to the Parliament of 1529, and he will find it bears a striking resemblance to speeches made to Barebones Parliament in 1653. "Scripture taketh princes to be, as it were, fathers and nurses to their subjects, and by Scripture it appeareth that it appertaineth to the office of princes to see that right religion and true doctrine be maintained and taught, and that their subjects may be well ruled and governed by good and just laws." Is this from the Puritan Grand Remonstrance of 1641? It is from a Catholic work, revised by the orthodox Henry VIII. The separation from Rome was proposed, "forasmuch as St. Paul willeth man to withdraw from all such as walk inordinately"—words which might have been used to justify Parliament in making war on Charles.

It is incumbent on us to rid ourselves of the associations which have attached themselves to words and phrases in more recent times, and to hear them as they were meant to be heard. Our own speech will sound equally affected some day. When one notices the revulsion of some people at Roundhead forms of diction, one is reminded of what Mr. Horwill tells us in his *American Dictionary*. A young girl in the States declared that the

Casket scene in the *Merchant of Venice* was too gloomy for comedy: "caskets" meaning "coffins" in America. What this child had to learn with regard to Shakespearean phraseology we have to learn to do with Puritan—defecate it of its modern accretions.

Evangelical Churchmanship and Nonconformity have greatly suffered from popular neglect of this sound principle. Men are "put off" by the unfamiliar style, which sounds at the worst hypocritical, at the best affected. They hate it as ordinary persons hate the Oxford accent or the parsonic whine: and they feel much the same sort of annoyance as used to be aroused by the "thee" and "thou" of the Quakers, which, so far as I know, only Longfellow's Evangeline liked at the first hearing. I have known people so thoroughly nauseated by the turns of phrase in George Fox's *Journals* that they can hardly admit Fox's piety. "Why on earth," they say, "could he not call a church a church, instead of a steeple-house?"<sup>1</sup>

But for all this Fox was a saint, and so were many of the Evangelicals I knew, despite the words in which they clothed their saintliness. Some of these were indeed fantastic. A Methodist minister would talk of "travelling" in Bradford or Newcastle, and of "sitting down" when he meant retiring from active work. "When I have travelled forty years," said a minister in my hearing, "I shall sit down."

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that Macaulay detested the "Octave of St. Swithin" as he detested the Quaker "First Day, Second Day" for Sunday and Monday. *We* often irritate others as much as they irritate us.



"I shall not stand for that office," declared another minister in the Methodist Conference when a post was offered him which he disliked. "Then you'll have to sit down." "I shall not sit down either." "In that case," answered the chartered libertine of the Conference, "you'll have to be suspended." "Worn-out minister," "connexional man," "horse-hire fund," "brother in the Lord"—all these were phrases which, for various reasons, the uninitiated may need to have explained. "On the plan" means to be a recognised preacher in a circuit and to have your name on the prospectus of services for the ensuing quarter. I have already noticed "sat under a preacher" for "was a regular listener to him." Many other phrases are pleasantly recorded in a once-famous novel, *Isabel Carnaby*, by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, a daughter of that distinguished Methodist, Lord Wolverhampton;<sup>1</sup> but she by no means exhausted the list. Such Scriptural phrases as "fall from grace," "cultivate earnestly the best gifts," "press toward the mark," "the bond of iniquity," "the blood of Jesus," were constantly on the lips of pious people, and were spoken with perfect simplicity. "I have been marvellously sustained," said a good man who had recently lost his wife; "I had fainted, but the Lord helped me." "Backsliding" was the regular word for a reversion to evil ways after a period of "walking in the light." These might, and did, irritate the ordinary man;

<sup>1</sup> Secretary for India under Lord Rosebery, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under Campbell-Bannerman.

but there was no religious pedantry about them as they were used.

Other modes of speech, of a more secular kind, may strike us to-day as equally strange. It would be interesting to trace the variations of phrase used at different times to denote ability. Sir Francis Knollys called Mary Queen of Scots not a "capable" woman, but a "notable" one. In my youth she would have been characterised as "very superior." A good man was often spoken of with the title "devout" or "blessed." "Respectable"—though Dickens had damned Mr. Littimer with the epithet—was still used as if it really connoted respect.<sup>1</sup> "Amusing" meant "interesting".<sup>2</sup> Cowper's "Task," as I often heard, was an "amusing" poem, while "John Gilpin" was "waggish" or "facetious"—neither word carrying any satirical implication. People were "looked upon" with contempt or admiration as the case might be, and the Mayor was often spoken of, in his presence, as "worthy" without the slightest hint of irony. I once heard an albino of twenty-one called, by a speaker of sixty, his "venerable friend," but I imagine this was due to a defect of eyesight.

As for slang, in the circles I frequented it was rigorously checked. "Jolly" as an emphatic adverb was frowned upon, and "awfully" was confined to

<sup>1</sup> As it constantly does in Macaulay. "Hirtius is a very respectable writer." "Johnson's *Irene* and Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man* are respectable performances": these judgments are *favourable*.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced, as by Gilbert in the *Mikado*, with a strong accent on the second *e*.

its legitimate sphere. I once heard a daring youth say, "Anyone could see that with half an eye"; and he was solemnly asked how much he really thought he could see with the visual organs thus reduced. Needless to say, Masters at school carefully repressed the habit. Not long ago a boy, responding to a request of a Master, expressed his willingness in the phrase, "Right ho, sir," and the Master let it go. The corresponding phrase, whatever that may have been in the eighties, was never heard in similar circumstances. The first advances of the evil were occasionally met with a smile. "Where did you find that meaning for that Greek word?" said my Head Master to a boy who had ventured an out-of-the-way translation. "In the Big Dic, sir," replied the boy. "In Liddell and Scott's Larger Lexicon, I suppose you mean," answered the Head. But I knew a less lucky lad who lost half his marks in a History paper for having, quite unintentionally, fallen into a slang description of Henry VIII, who appeared as an "old rip" or the equivalent thereof.

In girls' schools, of course, things were "more so." "Unladylike language" covered a very large area of the English phrase-book. In a school of which I heard much—for the Head Mistress was a pioneer of modern education, hardly less famous than Miss Beale and Miss Buss—a girl was overheard using the dreadful expression "I'm in an awful sweat." "My dear," said the Head Mistress, more in sorrow than in anger, "horses sweat, young gentlemen perspire,

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young ladies are in a glow." This same girl, as she told me herself in later years, was rebuked for using the word "duffer," and for saying, when an ink-pot fell over, that it had made a "horrible mess."

Time-saving abbreviations of the "Big Dic" kind were hardly better than slang. With the possible exceptions of "exam" and "matric," to which I have already referred, you were expected to give words their proper length. In "vétérinary" and "láboratory" the strongly accented first syllable drew all the other syllables after it like so many schoolboys flocking into class in obedience to a péremptory bell. What would have been thought of the B.B.C. "indissóluble" I shudder to think. Nor was the time ripe for such abominations as "footer," "soccer," "rugger," "brekker," *et hoc genus omne*.<sup>1</sup> Had they appeared they would have been destroyed like vermin.

Swearing, needless to say, one spoke of with horror; indeed, it was once seriously discussed whether we ought to continue to associate with a boy who said, "I'll take my oath on it." "Well, I'm blowed"—though it was rumoured that some saintly people did not mind it if it were made grammatical, and "I'm blown" were substituted—was

<sup>1</sup> When this fashion was at its height, Mr. Hamilton Thompson, now the distinguished Professor, satirised it in verses which ought to have killed it. After forty years I still remember some of the lines, from "Paradigger Regagger, by J. Miltogger." One of them was

*Agger, the igger of Gagger, mother of artis  
And eloquagger.*

Mr. Thompson promised us further specimens, from "Adonagger, by the Sheller"; but these, I believe, never saw the light.

"looked upon" with grave suspicion. All the various synonyms for the now unabashed "damn" were regarded as subterfuges scarcely better than the word they displaced. A little rhyme—only whispered, it is true—expressed the general feeling:

*Naughty little cuss-words,  
Bother, dash, and blow,  
All of these, and wuss words  
Send you down below.*

Even the eloquence of Spurgeon's sermon against blasphemy—it was said that he heard "It's damned hot" as he entered his Tabernacle, and chose the phrase as his text—could not reconcile some people to the daring with which he repeated it.<sup>1</sup> A novel which used the word, even though putting it in the mouth of a bad man, was regarded by many as unfit for pious perusal. Some persons, it is true, were more liberal-minded. "Don't you see," said one good man to another, "that, by making such a villain swear, the author implies his hatred of the habit?" "It may be so," was the reply, "but by printing the word he spreads the knowledge of it." Nor was the excuse admitted that the author had printed only two letters of the obnoxious vocable. "That only arouses curiosity," said the objector. He was the sort of man who would, in Elizabethan

<sup>1</sup> Whether this well-known story is true or not I cannot say. Spurgeon was the theme of innumerable anecdotes, many certainly invented. One of these is that in reading the third chapter of Daniel, and coming to the repetition of 'cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music', he abbreviated the list to "Band as before." I have heard this told of at least half a dozen other popular preachers.

times, have supported the Act for restraining the licence of players. As it is likely that the substitution of "eternal" for "infernal" hardly deceived the groundlings, so, one may be sure, modern subterfuges failed. This man, and others of his kind, would have suppressed that schoolboy oath which, as Disraeli in *Coningsby* tells us, "perpetuates the deity of Olympus"; and I once heard even *Tom Brown* gravely censured because there is, in that otherwise sound tale, a single example of that dubious phrase. "By Jove" continues to be used.

I distinctly remember the time when the American "darn" crossed the Atlantic, and the horror of certain ministers when one of their brethren made a pun on it. But their horror was just as great when someone, instead of saying "I attacked him," used the Yankee phrase "I went for him." He defended himself by saying he was borrowing from the *Heathen Chinee*. A minister, well acquainted with the slums, once maintained that, in the mouths of his slum-friends, "You be damned" meant no more than "Go away" in the mouths of luckier persons; but he was told that it was his plain duty to check the habit. Evil communications, it was suggested, were dulling his sense of wrong. I never heard an oath in the five years of my time at the school I have described above.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The feeling extended even into the world of sleep. The son of somewhat precise parents had a dream, in which he received a telegram from a friend, "Ploughed again. Damn the examiners." This was bad enough; but the dream speedily became a nightmare, for his parents saw the telegram, and showed their horror so ferociously that he woke up dripping with perspiration.

There were other points which it may be of interest to notice. Pronunciation varies imperceptibly but surely, and no phonetic systems, no instructions to radio-announcers, will do more than check the rate of change. Could we hear our grandfathers to-day, we should be astonished at tones and accents which we never noticed when we did hear them—for those tones and accents were our own. It takes some effort to recall even the more marked features of their talk, and the nuances are probably lost for ever. But I know that I was never, in my childhood, allowed to say *clothes*: *cloes* was the only correct style, and the rhyme with *nose* in “The maid was in the garden” was exact. Similarly, I was told that no gentleman ever pronounced the *h* in *hotel*, *hospital*, or *humour*; or in any case when it preceded the *u* we hear in *mute*. One was rebuked for pedantry if one made the *d* in *soldier* or *guardian* distinct; the *jus et norma loquendi* demanded *soljer*, *guarjan*; and, in like manner *righteous* (a word often used in our household) must show no trace of the *t*. Words like *vehement* (*vement*) were rigorously cut down. On the other hand, the final *g* in words like *swelling*, *hunting* was, in the society I knew, carefully marked; we were taught to keep the happy mean between the vulgarity of the upper-class *huntin’*, *shootin’*, and the dialectic *huntin’g*, *shootin’g*, of Yorkshire and Lancashire. When we pointed out that Shelley, Keats,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be remembered that Miss Amy Lowell did not know what to make of Keats’s delinquencies in this matter. It is plain she had not the slightest idea that in 1820 “no gentleman” would ever have pronounced the *g*.

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and even Scott would rhyme *yelling* with *Helvellyn*, the answer was that Shelley was the son of a squire, Keats a Cockney, and Scott a Borderer. This illustrates, what hardly needs emphasising, the effect of printers' spelling on our pronunciation; and printers' spelling is often, like Johnson's definition of "pastern," a matter of pure ignorance. In a familiar line of Chaucer, for instance, we read "a verray *parfit* gentle knight," and this exactly represents the pronunciation. Some printer, thinking that *parfit* was *directly* derived from *perfectum*, and knowing nothing of Anglo-French, showed off his half-knowledge by printing it *perfect*. I find, in a spelling-book of 1754, that the *c* was still silent, and *er* pronounced *ar*. But the eye has prevailed over the ear, and we now have the trouble (no light thing in the total) of pronouncing a difficult combination of sounds when a very simple one was at our disposal. A like fate has befallen scores of other words. In *faut* the Old French *u* represents the Latin *l* of *fallere*. A printer, having the Latin in his mind, added a quite superfluous *l*, which, as every reader of Pope knows,<sup>1</sup> our ancestors refused to pronounce. But the *l* remained, and in time, to the annoyance of speakers and the embarrassment of rhymesters, we have been compelled to pronounce it. Such has been the case with the *h* of *humble* of which I spoke above; such has been the case with innumerable names of places and persons; and such will doubtless

<sup>1</sup> *If severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.*



be the case with *victuals*, *debris*, *depot*, and a thousand words of like kind. We see the process going on at this moment with *garage*, *chauffeur*, *chassis*. You can hear *Durby* and *Burkshire* tolerably often, as you can hear *clurk* not merely in America. I well recall how, when Irish obstruction made the *clôture* necessary, the word was assuming a native pronunciation: but fortunately the English *closure* contrived to drive it out altogether. Even in my time there were a few survivals of pronunciations which George Russell, in *Collections and Recollections*, records as familiar to him in his youth on the lips of old people. I heard *Lunnon*<sup>1</sup> and *gould*, as Russell heard them, but more rarely; and they were noticed as very old-fashioned.

Actual deliberate attempts to alter pronunciation usually fail. The endeavours of men like Robert Bridges to restore old or more accurate speech have met with no success. It is said, however, that the lengthening of the *e* in *evil* was the result of a determination of a coterie of young men, who were, they declared, sick of the constant rhyming of *evil* and *devil*, and had resolved to make such monotony henceforth impossible. There was in the Oxford of my time a tradition that Bampton lecturers, despairing of converting infidels by their sermons, had decided at any rate to convert words, and to

<sup>1</sup> "If," wrote Gray to Horace Walpole in 1757, "you will be vulgar and pronounce it Lunnon instead of London, I can't help it." But in the early days of the old ladies whom Russell knew, the pronunciation had been fashionable and correct; and the restoration of the *d* is another example of the influence of the eye over the tongue. A glance at Mavor's Spelling Book, in one of the earlier of its seventy editions, will provide other examples.

introduce at least one new pronunciation per lecture. Farrar, for instance, introduced *divine* in his first lecture, and *ápologetic* in his second. What he did in the remaining four I do not know. I fear he had as little success with words as with unbelievers.

I have already hinted that, in judging the language of the Evangelicals, one must be careful to note whether it was a peculiarity of the "sect," or whether it was not the common style of the time. I have known some of the most stupendous oratorical flights of Robert Hall, or some of the most penetrating passages of John Foster, to be censured on the ground that their diction is too precise and formal, touched perhaps with a taint of Johnsonese. I doubt whether any English orator was ever more daring or more consummately triumphant than Hall in his sermon at one of the most doubtful moments of the Napoleonic War, when failure was only too possible. Bidding his hearers not lose heart or flag in their efforts, he went on, "I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose." Then came a pause, in which the hearers were tense with expectation, perhaps with a slight fear that the orator would not be able to maintain the height he had reached. They were soon reassured. "Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands, inflamed

with your spirit, are ready to swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours, and cemented with your blood." This is not the rhetoric of to-day, and there are three or four polysyllables too many for our taste. But it is not a distinctively Nonconformist style. The prose of Coleridge, who hated Dissent, is the same, without the redeeming eloquence and passion: it has more of the heaviness with none of the weight. We find the same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, in the *Tales* of Poe, and in the conversations of educated people in Scott. It is hard for us to feel that this was a natural and easy style a hundred years ago; that people *did* talk like Julia Mannering or Flora MacIvor, or that when, in the *Scottish Chiefs*, Wallace assured Helen that "the rope of Edward should never sully his animated body," he was using the words which Jane Porter's readers would have liked to use themselves. Here is a passage from *Oceanus*, a book on geography by Mrs. Osborne, published in 1850, and affectionately dedicated to the children of Lady Jane Swinburne. It is supposed to be spoken by a young child. "Oh, what beautiful weather. These sort of evenings (*sic*) are so suitable for story-telling, that I regret more than ever the disagreeable necessity which has taken my godpapa to foreign countries, and broken up our delightful parties. Do you not remember, papa, you said we were to examine into the particulars respecting the oceans of the world, and not

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once was the subject mentioned while we were at Herne Bay, although the sea was continually before us to remind us of it? ” One would think that the poet, if he studied this book as a boy, turned to Greek and Italian for relief. And yet this was the common style of books for children, and I remember many books of the kind which we read, at the age of nine or ten, without any sense of incongruity. It is hard, but worth the trouble, to recognise that our fathers, when, in good Coleridgian and Wordsworthian manner, they spoke of Eliza Cook’s “poetical effusions,” were using the words without a touch of sarcasm.<sup>1</sup> A critic who to-day should thus characterise the works of Mr. Eliot or Mr. Spender would run the risk of a libel action. None the less, we must make the attempt. As Sidney Hartland urged anthropologists to “think black” in order duly to appreciate savage ideas, so we must “think Victorian” if we would understand the nineteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> A single volume of Coleridge contained thirty-six “Effusions,” a title which disgusted Charles Lamb. “I could recollect no title,” said Coleridge, “more descriptive of the manner and matter of the Poems.” Wordsworth’s immortal verses on “the rapt one of the godlike forehead” are an “extempore effusion.” I have a dim idea that the *Saturday Review* killed the word.

## CHAPTER XV

### PRE-SOVIET RUSSIA

I SUPPOSE that the children of Shem, Ham, and Japhet would desire to hear something about those who had lived before the Flood, and would scarcely be content to be told merely that they did eat, they drank, they married and were given in marriage. There would be a feeling that the great catastrophe had wrought a change in human nature: that the virtues and sins of the Antediluvians were in some ways different from those of their grandchildren. Much the same, I imagine, is the feeling of the young to-day as to the period before the catastrophe of which they hear their fathers speak—an event comparable only to a world-destroying inundation. The old order is dead in half the countries of the world: and in none is it more completely of the past than in Russia. I have thought that a few personal memories of the old régime may be of interest, slight though they be. Having seen near at hand some sad features of that régime, I cannot regret its departure, terrible as have been the accompaniments of its overthrow, and keen as are one's doubts as to whether what has taken its place is not even worse. In any case I can only tell what I myself know. And here I cannot refrain from dwelling

on the experiences of a victim of Czarist tyranny which I heard from his own lips. They were typical of hundreds, and go far to explain the violence of the Bolshevik revolution. Mr. Felix Volkhovsky was a graduate of the University of Kasan, and editor of a paper which would in England have been regarded as Conservative, but which, though extremely cautious, was too Radical for the Government. At two o'clock one morning he was suddenly taken from his bed, and hurried to the rat-haunted prison of St. Peter and St. Paul. He asked what was his offence: no answer was vouchsafed.<sup>1</sup> He was kept there without trial for two years. "I was determined," said Volkhovsky, "not to go mad. At the risk of betraying myself to spies, I conversed with my neighbour by knocking on the wall, one knock for A, two for B, and so on. In this way, after perhaps three-quarters of an hour, we learnt each other's names; and gradually we contrived a kind of shorthand which abbreviated the labour. In addition to this, I composed a long poem in my head, for no pens or papers were allowed, nor, in the dim light, would they in any case have been worth while. Moving to and fro in my twelve-foot cage, I recited the lines. I can still remember hundreds of them."

After the two years, he was suddenly released, again without being told the reason, and for a short while was left at liberty; when once more, for no

<sup>1</sup> Some years later, when visiting the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which stands on a marshy island in the Neva, I was suddenly startled by the guide, who, first looking carefully around, whispered, "The prisoners are below us here." The idea was horrible: it was as if dungeons were below King's College Chapel in Cambridge, damp, dark, and filthy.

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offence that he could imagine, the hand of tyranny fell upon him, and, with his wife and two sons, he was marched to Siberia—a journey for horror almost worse than that of the Jews who were driven from Jerusalem to Babylonia. One of his sons died of the hardship.

In Siberia, the exiles were welcomed, for their education made them useful in posts requiring some knowledge, such as those of bank-clerks or secretaries. At Tobolsk, therefore, Volkhovsky soon obtained a post which enabled him to make some sort of living. No sooner, however, was this known in Petersburg, than he was ordered away. At Omsk the same thing happened; a few months of work were followed by another expulsion. At the fourth or fifth of these uprootings, his second son died, and his wife lost her reason; he determined therefore to escape or die. A more thrilling story I have never heard than that of his succeeding adventures. After losing himself a score of times, he managed to reach the Amur, and here, watching his chances, he hid himself, with a bag of raw vegetables picked up in the fields, in the hold of a boat. When his store of turnips was exhausted, he slipped ashore, and begged or stole a fresh supply of food, waited for the next boat, and hid himself again. After incredible anxieties and privations, he at length reached Vladivostok, and somehow came first to Yokohama and thus to America.

The tale now falls to be told by another. George Kennan, the American whose revelations of Siberian

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atrocities had led to his being banned in Russia, I met in England, and from him I learned the rest. He was in his home in America when a visitor was announced, and a man, broken and aged before his time, with all the marks of pain and misery upon him, came in. It was Volkhovsky, of whom Kennan had heard. "I have lost my wife and my sons," said he, in a voice which imprisonments and wanderings had reduced to a hoarse whisper. "I have yet one thing left to make it worth while to live. My daughter is in a convent—if she can be got out and join me, I shall be able to endure. Can you do it?"

"It is no use *my* trying," said Kennan. "Every letter of mine is opened." He thought for a while. "There is Mrs. —; she has given no offence, and may manage it."

There was then no telegraph in far Siberia, and strange as it may seem Volkhovsky's escape was even now not known in Petersburg. The lady wrote to the convent, I think offering to adopt the child. At any rate, the girl was released, and passed the frontier just in time. Volkhovsky lived on, a wreck, but free.

There were other stories told me by Kennan. One he would not guarantee, but he believed it true. The Czar, Alexander III, was attended by guards even in the Winter Palace—for his father's death was a nightmare ever present to him. He had *one* friend, the head-gardener, and *one* pleasure, watching the garden, for he was a lover of flowers.



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For some time, he and the gardener had been trying to produce a new rose. One morning he was in the garden, and saw, as he thought, that the rose had bloomed. He signalled to the gardener, who came running towards him, delight on every line of his face. The soldiers had not seen the signal. Any unsolicited advance toward the Czar was treason. They shot him dead.<sup>1</sup>

Another story Kennan did guarantee, for he heard it from Tolstoi. The Czar was travelling from Moscow to Odessa. As he had seen threats against his life fastened to a pin-cushion on his dressing-table, it was desirable to take precautions. Three trains were therefore chartered, and it was never known in which of them he might be. At every bridge was a commissioned officer with a small cohort of armed men; at every hundred or two hundred yards a non-commissioned officer with four or five. Notices were posted up warning people not to cross the line during the time at which the trains would pass. Some of Tolstoi's moujiks regularly crossed that line on their way to work, and they came as usual that morning. The soldiers pointed to the notice; but as they could not read, they came on. Instead of quietly speaking, or forming a line to stop them, the soldiers shot them all.

When Kennan told me this story, I thought more highly of Julius Cæsar, who held that it was better

<sup>1</sup> Suspicion of this sort was everywhere in Russia. Many years later, we had some Russian friends, and sent them a Christmas pudding as a token of English friendship. It never reached them; it was obviously concealing a bomb, and was opened by experts to prevent the infernal machine from doing its work.

to die at once than to be everlastingly guarding himself against death.

I had myself a curious experience of Russian ways. An idea struck me for a purely fanciful tale. A chess match was to be played in Moscow, between an Englishman and a Russian, precisely at the time when the Czar was about to make a journey, the route and the stopping-places being of course falsified in the official announcements. The Nihilist refugees in England, however, had contrived to obtain knowledge of the real route, and, in order to inform their Russian fellow-conspirators, hit upon the idea of seizing the English chess-master, and forcing him to promise to play a fantastic game, in which the moves should form a cipher. D<sub>2</sub> for example, would signify two days spent in Dorpat, G<sub>3</sub> three in Grodno, and so on. I sent the tale to a magazine, which accepted and published it under the title "A King's Gambit." Whether it was widely read in England I do not know; but it certainly found *one* reader, and that a distinguished and quite unexpected one. Shortly afterwards the editor received a visit from an attaché of the Russian Embassy. The whole story had been blacked out in every copy permitted to enter Russia,<sup>1</sup> and, if anything like it appeared again, the magazine would be entirely suppressed in the country. Years afterwards, this incident was forcibly recalled to my mind. I

<sup>1</sup> I have seen copies of *The Times* in Russia on which the blacking process had been lavishly used. It would have been possible to play a game of draughts on some of the pages. Needless to say, the sight aroused curiosity: what *could* be the villainy which was unfit for the Holy Empire's subjects to read?

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was travelling from Warsaw<sup>1</sup> to Moscow, and was beguiling the tedium of the eternal pine-forest by playing chess with a friend on a little "status quo" board. The steward, who had never seen anything of the kind before, looked at it, and plainly suspected something sinister in it; nor was he satisfied till he had called the chief of the train (a retired colonel) to inspect it. That gentleman came, stared hard at the machine, and finally decided that my friend and I were hardly likely to cause an explosion of which we should be the only certain victims.

Among my Russian acquaintances, who belonged to the intelligentsia, there was not one who had not a relative in Siberia. Some of these sufferers reminded one of Alice Lisle or Elizabeth Gaunt. The Head Mistress of a Moscow school, a woman of very high cultivation and refinement, had received into her house a refugee of the 1905 Revolution. For this crime she was banished to Siberia for four years, and on her release had the choice between suicide and starvation. A young man had an even worse fate. Banished for his share in the uprising of 1905, he was released by Kerensky. No sooner had Kerensky fallen than he was banished again by Lenin, and he is still in hopeless exile. "The redder," as Scott tells us, "gets aye the worst lick in the fray"; and the moderate man is exposed to violence from the extremists of both sides. A foreigner might have some mercy shown him. A

<sup>1</sup> Where, incidentally, I saw a chained band of about a hundred political prisoners being marched, under an armed guard, to forced labour.

German conductor—as conductors of all nations at times do—lost his temper with his orchestra, and spoke unadvisedly with his lips. “You are all fools in Russia,” he said, “from the Czar down.” These final four words were reported, and he was told to be out of the country in twenty-four hours.

The constant interferences of Government were indeed astonishing, and one wondered how the most energetic could give themselves so much trouble. Coming out of the theatre, where we had heard Chaliapine at his youthful best, we were suddenly surprised, after about fifty people had got safely away, to find ourselves shut in. “What is this for?” I said to my friend. “The police want to remind us that they are still on the watch” replied he, in a cautious whisper. There was no need of the reminder; for the memory of the Cossack atrocities in Moscow during the Revolution was still vivid: and timidity was written on every face. No one ever mentioned the Czar; even eulogy might be taken as irony, and mean years of exile. The people, shut out from politics, were driven back on art; and it would be difficult to imagine any better acting, painting, or music than was produced in Moscow during the few years between 1905 and 1914. But it was the bloom on the face of a dying consumptive; the fate of Czarism might come sooner or it might come later: it was as certain as death. Unhappily, it brought with it the ruin of its enemies also: for the educated

Liberals survived it only a few months. "The cease of majesty dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw what's near it with it."

One evil, I believe, the Soviet régime *has* done away with. It has abolished the pestilential beggars; and almost everybody was a beggar in Czarist days. Jews, for instance, were not allowed, by law, in the great towns; but, if they paid a sufficiently large *pourboire* to the Governor, they were winked at. No Jew could be a professor; but Mr. Pasternak, a distinguished artist, father of one of the best-known Russian poets of to-day, happened to have some wealthy friends, who subscribed a sum that, like Claudius's "wicked prize," bought out the law; and he became professor of painting in Moscow. One very amusing example of this cupidity came my way. We had sent some luggage on in advance; and when we reached Moscow we saw it in a crate, but it was impossible, apparently, to get it out. The stationmaster—to judge by his uniform and his decorations, a retired field-marshal—told us that as it was after noon in the crate the luggage must stay till the morrow. We took our handbags, accordingly, and made our way to the house of the friend with whom we were to spend some time. "Where is your luggage?" said he; and we told him what had happened. "You didn't understand," he said; "the stationmaster wanted a tip." "What!" I cried, "tip-ping a field-marshal!" "You tip everybody in Russia," he replied; and, calling a servant, gave

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him ten roubles, and bade him go to the station. In half an hour the luggage was with us.

Another friend of ours, who had a son at school in England, told us that he had set his face against this blackmail. His boy came home for the summer holidays, and his trunk remained in the station the whole of the six weeks. The "field-marshal," however, was kind enough, even without receiving a gratuity, to let the lad take it back with him to England at the end of the vacation.

It may well be believed that after experiences like these, even the incomparable beauty and interest of Russian art, music, and architecture, to say nothing of the amazing hospitality of the people, did not tempt us to make a home there. To cross the border and enter Germany—though Germany too was a militarised state—was to breathe a freer air; and when in Berlin we watched the Kaiser going from the Palace to church, without noticing that anyone was shot during his transit, we felt that we had left Asia for Europe and the Middle Ages for something like modernity. We did not foresee the future.

## CONCLUSION

MANY BOOKS have been written, by men who have discarded their early beliefs, describing Victorian religion in a hostile spirit. Few have been able, while rejecting the doctrines, to think with charity of the people who held the doctrines. Not many have succeeded, like George Eliot, in at once disbelieving the creed of Dinah Morris and drawing a Dinah Morris with sympathy. Most of them betray a certain resentment at the restrictions of their youth, and allow it unduly to colour their descriptions.

The savage indignation of Samuel Butler is easy to understand, and to understand is to forgive. He had suffered greatly at the hands of his father, in the most susceptible years of his life, and he could not forget. But to recognise the provocation is not to admit the truth of the picture. In my opinion, *The Way of All Flesh*, if taken as a description of the usual life of the fifties, is as false as any affidavit ever signed; as false indeed as the character of Darwin which Butler, in a frenzy of *odium scientificum*, drew to the amazement of posterity. I should not desire to complete these random chapters without making an attempt to correct Butler's outlines. I have already done something,

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in my measure, to correct them; but, in these concluding pages, I will try to add a few more touches to the sketch I have endeavoured to give.

Butler's childhood was a series of floggings which would have made Solomon hold up his hands in horror; and the floggings were for offences which had no vice in them. They remind one of those which Anthony Trollope received a little earlier from another Dr. Butler. But Trollope's were administered at school, and were perhaps not much more frequent or severe than those inflicted in some schools to-day by elder boys on their juniors for breaking, purposely or otherwise, a football convention. Samuel Butler's were parental tortures; and these, so far as my knowledge goes, had almost entirely ceased in my generation. Many fathers, having suffered themselves, were determined never to allow their children to suffer similarly;<sup>1</sup> and some I knew even told Head Masters that they would remove their boys from school if they were not consulted before the punishment was inflicted. They must know the crime before they would permit the penalty; and if they were not satisfied that the penalty was deserved, it should not be inflicted at all. In their own homes they trusted to sympathy, persuasion, and the general atmosphere. It may be that many boys who would have benefited by a dose of physical pain thus escaped; but the gain on the whole was unquestionably

<sup>1</sup> The parents of Henry Thomas Buckle, even in the thirties, made this resolve, and kept it.

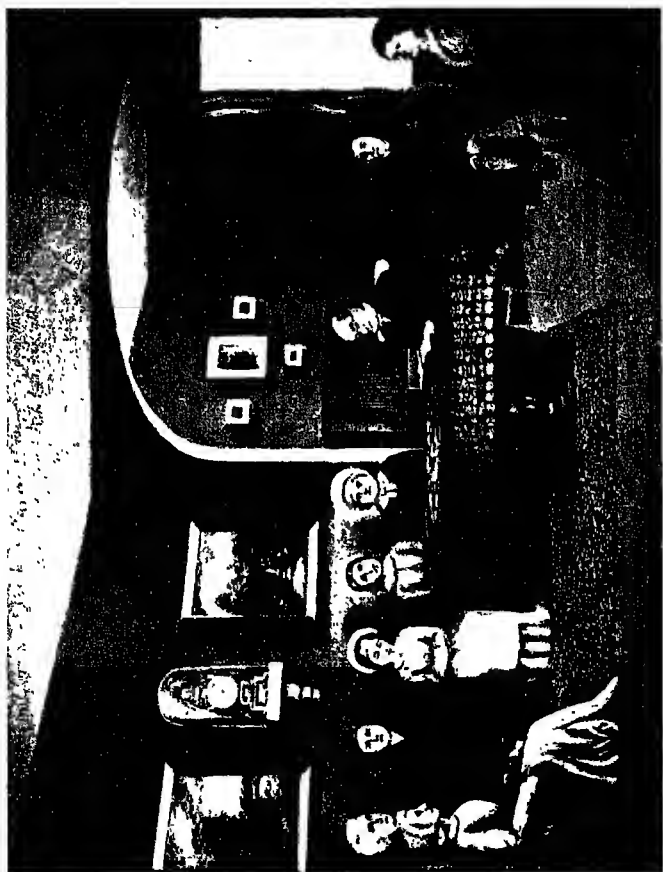


immense. I have heard, of course privately, of a number of cases in which the Head Master, apparently a man void of fear, has been restrained by this salutary check. In any case, he knew, he would have to give an account of his action; and he therefore walked circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.<sup>1</sup>

Butler was human, and it was humanly impossible for him not to hate his father. But as a man of science he ought not to have argued from the particular to the general. Æneas might say to Dido, in reference to the Greeks, *crimine ab uno disce omnes*; but there is no evidence that Æneas ever pretended to be a logician. Butler should have known better. I shall try to avoid his mistake. I shall not argue that because I knew some admirable Victorians, therefore all Victorians were admirable. But I have already given enough examples to prove that all Victorians were not hypocrites and humbugs; and a single contrary instance is enough to disprove a universal statement. In this final chapter I will give a few more.

I have in my mind a simple Manchester artisan, born far too early to profit by the Education Act of 1870, whose knowledge had been acquired in the scanty leisure he could command at the end of a

<sup>1</sup> That there *had* been, in earlier days, a frightful degree of savagery in certain schools, not to be exceeded in any imaginary Dotheboys Hall, may be indicated by an incident actually witnessed, by a very old gentleman of my acquaintance, in early youth. He had himself seen a master tin-tack a boy's ear to the desk before caning him. Such was the terror this wretch inspired, that not a boy told the tale to his parents, and even the victim himself maintained silence.



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**SAMUEL BUTLER'S PAINTING OF HIS FAMILY AT PRAYER, 1864**



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ten hours' day. He had taught himself to read, and his reading-book was almost exclusively the Bible, along with such commentaries as he could find. Unlike so many "Puritans," he was not keenly interested in the Books of Joshua and Judges; and if he had met a thirsty Amalekite or Amorite he would have given him a cup of cold water. Benevolence shone in his face, and the very sight of him was an encouragement to the weak and a consolation to the sorrowful. Children loved him at sight: and his mere presence was often enough to check a quarrel. From his small wage he set aside something for others who needed it, as he would say, more than he; and he regularly contributed to the funds of his church. When I recall this man's features, kindly manners, and spotless life, and think of the silent influence he exerted in his tiny sphere, I do not trouble about possible errors in his creed, nor do I fret myself as to whether his views were narrower than those I myself hold. His mind may have been narrow, but his heart was wide: he may have been too literal a believer in the verbal inspiration of the whole Bible, but he had caught its spirit, and expressed it in action, in a fashion the profoundest theologian might envy. He is long since dead, but "somewhere, surely, afar, in the sounding labour-house vast of being, is practised that strength, zealous, beneficent, firm."

On Sunday afternoons he conducted a Bible class for young men. He may have taught them at once too much and too little; but most of them learnt

from him what, at its best, a simple Christian faith can do.

These Scripture classes are not to be despised. I have a vivid memory of another man, in Bradford, whose Sunday afternoon class consisted of seventy or eighty young men and women, and was regularly crowded for years. At first sight you might have failed to recognise this man for the genius he was. Apart from a Bunyan-like acquaintance with the Authorised Version, he had no book-knowledge. He thought, as he put it in his expressive Yorkshire dialect, that the tides were caused "by t'joggling of t'earth as it turns on t'axis." But his vigorous eloquence, his extraordinary store of homespun illustrations, and his natural geniality, commanded the interest of generations of pupils; and it was his pride to show you the letters which, in an unending stream, came to him from former students in every corner of the world. Many of these never forgot him, and never tired of telling him how much they owed him. I remember saying to him once that in the text "our conversation is in heaven" the word "citizenship" was perhaps a better word than "conversation." "I don't like that," said he. "See here," and he took a letter out of his pocket. "This is from John Ramsden, who was in my class ten years ago, and he's now in the Argentine. He says, 'I was talking of you the other day.' You see, though he's so far away, his conversation is in Bradford. So, though we're only on earth, when we talk of heaven, our conversation's there." The Higher Criticism

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might have some small points to correct, but "the root of the matter," I felt and feel, was found in my old friend.

Possibly nothing has roused the wrath and contempt of later generations more than the records, which are voluminous, of pious children, many of whom died young, and whose biographies are too often a sad mingling of priggishness and sentimentality. Having been a student of these works in my own childhood, I can fully sympathise with the feelings of present-day readers—if such there be—and with the indignation of Sydney Smith, whose Erastian soul was nauseated alike by the tone and by the contents of the narratives. I have vividly before me the story of a little girl, who being overtaken in a fault and punished for it, "cried because the pain was not great enough"; and another of a little boy who, having done something wrong, put himself in the corner. A Little Lord Fauntleroy, with religiosity added, is not a pleasing spectacle. What made things worse was the discovery that some of these authors, like most Victorian biographers, gave the light only, and not the shade. A schoolgirl of twelve or thirteen died, and her life, written by her mother, was as glowing as a eulogy of Domitian by Martial. Apparently she was taken from the world because she was too good for it. Unluckily, I knew some of her schoolmates, and I discovered that none of them had noticed these virtues while the child lived. I was reminded of the old story of the crow who met a fowler, and got him

to promise to spare her brood. "How shall I know them?" asked the fowler. "Because they're the only white crows in the wood," said the mother. The sequel can easily be supplied. After reading this biography, although I could pardon the mother for her partiality, I was led to suspect the veracity of others; and when I saw one with the title *Consecrated Culture* I doubted both the culture and the consecration.

But not all children were of this kind. I have in my thoughts many boys who, though distinguished by simple piety, were yet totally free from priggishness—manly and straightforward, hard workers, good footballers, healthy-minded and sound in body—the exact opposite of the "Ericking" heroes of Farrar. They told the truth, faced misfortune with courage, but saw no reason to be ashamed of the fact that they were Christians. One in particular, now long since dead, was at the same time head of the school and captain at both the great games, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, immensely popular, but not afraid to risk his popularity for what he thought right; and everybody knew that nothing would move him when he had made up his mind that the course he had chosen was the true one. Everybody, also, knew he was pious; but not even the least religious ever called him "pi." This boy, after a brilliant career at the University, culminating in a Fellowship (incidentally, he played in two first teams for his College and rowed in its "eight"), became a Professor in India. Here he

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showed the same genius for friendship as at home, and was admired and beloved by all his pupils. When he died, the tributes to his work and personality were almost unprecedented ; and he is still remembered after thirty years. Indians are quick to detect insincerity, priggishness, or Puritanism in an English Christian : they detected nothing of the kind in him, Victorian and convinced Evangelical as he was, and as he never hesitated to declare himself to be.

I confess to feeling a little resentment when I hear people of the present generation ignoring cases like these, and confounding all Victorians in one comprehensive denunciation. " You cannot," said Burke, " easily lay an indictment against a whole nation " ; it ought to be equally improper to lay an indictment against a whole age. And, if an age is to be judged, its best types ought to be considered at least as carefully as its worst.

It may be hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but poverty is at least as great a hindrance. A daily struggle to keep alive, a constant anxiety about the morrow, make it very difficult to think about divine things ; and the " cares of this world " affect the poor more perilously than " the deceitfulness of riches " affects the prosperous. Yet I have known many cases, and heard of scores of others, in which these dangers and difficulties have been triumphantly overcome. As an historic example, I need point only to Lord Shaftesbury's nurse, to whose noble life and quiet teachings were due the Ten Hours Act and the innumerable



other inestimable benefits which Shaftesbury conferred upon his countrymen. As is well known, Shaftesbury ascribed them all to the Evangelicalism which he had learned from one good woman. Let Evangelicalism be as narrow and petty as one may choose to imagine; a little pettiness or narrowness is a small price to pay for the rescue of thousands of men, women and children from the horrible slavery revealed by the Bolton Report of 1842.

If the dead could speak, they would be able to tell of hundreds, if not thousands, of poor and forgotten people whose lives and characters were as noble as that of the woman who, by a freak of chance, is known to have had an influence we still feel. In their little sphere they were faithful over their few things; and the good they did, though invisible, is still working, nor will the sneers of ignorance prevail to undo it.

My last example shall be from an entirely different social sphere. Among my friends of an earlier generation was a man of deep and wide culture. He was not what Oxford or Cambridge would call a finished classical scholar; but he might, *mutatis mutandis*, have answered to Macaulay's definition, "A scholar is a man who reads Plato with his feet on the fender." He read Horace in Rome and by Mount Soracte, Virgil in Naples or Mantua, Catullus in Sirmio's "all-but-island"; nor did he disdain later writers like Ausonius and Prudentius.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reader may remember James Payn's sarcasm on those who carry about with them books of this kind. "I found myself," says he, "on a walking-tour quite bookless; not even with that copy of Montaigne's Essays or

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All this without a trace of pedantry. He read for his own pleasure, and spoke of books to please others. He was equally at home with the *Idylls of the King* and with Barclay's *Ship of Fools*; and he was ready with an apt quotation from De Quincey or from Bacon's *Essays*, from a French poet or from the *Biglow Papers*. He was an unsurpassed raconteur, with a mimetic power which enabled him to give an Irish brogue or a Cockney accent when the story demanded it. Those who heard his anecdotes of William Morris or Swinburne, whom he had known in earlier days, will not easily forget them. But I think I recall with most pleasure some of his descriptions. He happened to be at Milan in 1873 at the very moment of Manzoni's funeral. As a lover of *I Promessi Sposi*, he was glad to join the throngs of those who assembled to do honour to the great writer; and his description of the scene brought almost the whole of Italy before one's eyes. Hardly less vivid was his account of the funeral of General Grant, which also, by one of those chances that

Horace's poems without which, as is well known, no person with the slightest pretensions to culture ever moves a yard from his house." Had Payn known my friend, he would have learnt that it is possible to carry such a volume about and yet not be a pedant.

At the same time, those who think Victorians were all tainted with priggery might do worse than read Payn. When Lord Avebury brought out his list of the Hundred Best Books, and the papers were full of various people's opinions on its sins of omission and commission, Payn wrote, "I can imagine nothing better adapted than the study of these volumes to make a man a thorough prig." The search for Aveburian "culture" led some people up strange paths. I knew a mathematician who desired to correct the narrowness of his mind by means of a study of belles-lettres. "Read Shakespeare," said a literary friend. Some weeks later the mathematician turned up again. "Here I am," said he. "I have learnt by heart two thousand consecutive lines, with 'tucket sounds,' 'alarums,' and everything else all correct. Will that do?" The friend commended his diligence, and told him to stick thenceforward to the calculus.

befall the deserving, he was privileged to see. For his travels were as wide as his literary excursions, and he brought home from every country he visited something worth having, which he loved to share with others. As he talked of such things, even those who liked the sound of their own voices preferred to listen; they gave him room, and lent him a willing ear. He was, in fact, like Praed's Vicar, but with a larger parish, *vir nulla non donandus lauru*. As a speaker he was remarkably finished and ready. I heard him once when I really thought he would be nonplussed. A distinguished Professor had been lecturing on education, and had been saying that in his opinion boys should begin to specialise, not merely in a science, but in a special branch of science, at fourteen, and continue specialising their specialities till they should know everything about one thing and nothing about anything else. My friend was suddenly called on to propose a vote of thanks. "What on earth," I thought, "can he have to say? Every word has been gall and wormwood to him." But he was equal to the emergency. Rising without hesitation, he paid a few general compliments to the speaker, and then said, "There were a few things in the Professor's speech with which I should not like to express complete agreement without more time than is at my disposal." But what I wish to emphasise is that with all this my friend remained an absolutely simple and sincere Evangelical Christian, as serenely religious as the cottager immortalised by Cowper, who,

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“pillow and bobbins all her little store,” knew her Bible and nothing besides. He could enjoy, as few could enjoy, the chances given him, as he believed, by Providence, of seeing the world and of reading books; and he enjoyed them with gratitude to the Giver. But when the time came for these pleasures, so keenly felt, to be taken from him, he endured the loss with more than patience, confident that the deprivation was, as much as the privilege, the Divine will, and equally designed for his good. “The Lord gave, and the Lord had taken away.” I cannot refrain, as I dwell on my memory of this marvellous and saintly resignation, from quoting the last letter he ever wrote to me—a letter in which every word is as clearly written as if the writer had been forty years younger.

“I have by me more than one letter of yours, which I regret to say remains unanswered, owing to increasing physical infirmities and an accompanying lack of mental energy. I have ceased to deserve the name of correspondent, if the word means one who *writes* letters. A more genial interpretation of the word, however, would be ‘one who rejoices to *receive* letters,’ and, so interpreted, no one has a better right to be called a good correspondent than I. But I am now in the eighty-sixth year of my age, and the seventh of my confinement to bed, and I am dependent upon nurses by day and by night. My hands are crippled, and I hold a pen with difficulty, and such little writing as I do is done lying on my back. Can you wonder that

## AS I REMEMBER<sup>\* \*</sup>

I have practically ceased to write ? But, thank<sup>a</sup> God, my mind continues clear and active. I can read, and think, and when a friend comes my way I can enjoy his company and converse with him freely. And what I am still more thankful for is that I am not groping about for some One or some Thing, in whom or in which I may believe. My religious belief is in the main that of my childhood, and, though I have since then read some philosophy and a good deal of theology, I am not ashamed to confess that I still hold by the faith I learnt in early years."

